

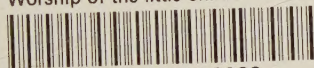
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THE LITTLE CHILD

EDNA DEAN BAKER

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The Worship of the Little Child

By EDNA DEAN BAKER

*President of National Kindergarten
and Elementary College*

A TEXTBOOK IN THE STANDARD TRAINING COURSE
OUTLINED AND APPROVED BY THE INTER-
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To

ALL THE LITTLE CHILDREN
WITH WHOM I HAVE LEARNED
TO "WORSHIP THE FATHER
IN SPIRIT AND IN
TRUTH"

75076

PREFACE

THERE is no other activity employed in education which demands the insight and skill required to lead a child to worship God "in spirit and in truth." God is a spirit, universal, selfless, realized in the soul of the believer. The child is concrete in his thinking, objective in his interests, and self-centered in his living. To bring this child into real communion with the unselfish, unseen, omnipresent God, to make God a greater Father and a companionable friend functioning in the conduct and service of daily life, is the high and holy calling and the difficult and dangerous task of the teacher of beginners.

It is a difficult and dangerous task because the questions that the child asks are searching, the chances for misunderstanding, superstition and loss of faith are very great. However, we cannot escape the responsibility, for the child will not let us be silent. He demands answers to his questions, a pilot in his search after the unknown God whom he will ignorantly worship or lightly esteem if we withhold the truth.

It is the hope of the author that this little book may give teachers and parents of small children some help in meeting this great problem.

EDNA DEAN BAKER.

EVANSTON, ILL., April 4, 1927.



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CHAPTER I

THE MEANING OF WORSHIP IN CHILD LIFE

THE intrinsic value to the race of one little child is beyond computation. Not only is he the bearer of the treasure of the past on the highroad to the future, but no mind can fathom his creative potentialities for discovery, for invention, for artistic production, for social or religious leadership. By his single life, as through the invention of a radio, the progress of civilization may be incalculably hastened. And yet this nation spends more money on the breeding of cattle and upon the cultivation of wheat and corn than it does upon its children, and the Church pays far more attention to music and sermons and pastoral calls for the adult members of the congregation than to the training of childhood and youth.

Edith Nesbit, in the poem, "One of These Little Ones," does not paint too strong a contrast:

"What of the garden I gave?"

God said to me.

"Hast thou been diligent to foster and save

The life of flower and tree?

How have the roses thriven,

The lilies I have given,

The pretty, scented miracles that spring

And summer came to bring?"

"My garden is fair and dear,"

I said to God.

"From thorns and nettles I have kept it clear,

Close-trimmed its sod.

The rose is red and bright,
The lily a live delight;
I have not lost a flower of all the flowers
That blessed my hours."

"What of the child I gave?"

God said to me.

"The little, little thing I died to save,
And gave in trust to thee?
How have the flowers grown
That in its soul were sown,
The lovely, living miracles of youth
And hope and joy and truth?"

"The child's face is all white,"

I said to God.

"It cries for cold and hunger in the night;

Its feet have trod

The pavements muddy and cold;

It has no flowers to hold,

And in its soul the flowers you set are dead."

"Thou fool!" God said.

Religious Needs. The physical and mental needs of the child cannot be ignored by the Church or by the teacher of beginners in the Church school, but the religious needs, "the soul flowers," as the poet calls them, are of supreme concern. What are the attitudes of this child of four or five toward his parents, his playmates, the flowers and the animals in the out-of-doors, the possessions in the home and the school? Is he antagonistic, sullen, ungrateful, irresponsible, destructive; or is he friendly, happy, loving, careful, and helpful? Does he have certain ideas about his place in the social group and the rules and regulations that maintain there? Does he cheerfully obey these rules or does he openly flaunt them

and secretly evade them? Has he discovered God at the heart of his universe, the source of parents, of playmates, of flowers and pets, the giver of all good things, the loving Father of all? Has he experienced the beginning of love and reverence and faith toward God? Unless he has had this experience, he has not become fully orientated in his universe, for the little child feels the age-old desire to identify himself with the source of all things. As Coe expresses it, "a child has more than a passive capacity for spiritual things. . . . A positive spiritual nature goes forth spontaneously in search of God."¹

The Function of Worship. In the process of identifying the self with God, worship is of vital moment; for worship is both the passive contemplation in which the self meets and recognizes God, as when Elijah heard the "still, small voice," and it is the active response of the individual to the consciousness of the presence of God as when Mary said: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord. Be it unto me even according to thy word." Through worship the self comes into direct contact with God and the individual life is swept into the current of divine energy, is filled with the spirit of God.

In the experience of worship emotions of love, gratitude, good will, faith, reverence are intensified, social attitudes are created, ethical purposes are born, and the one great purpose of living life at its best receives a mighty impetus. Through worship, the religious nature is kept alive and nourished, lesser

¹George Albert Coe: "Education in Religion and Morals," page 62. Copyright Fleming H. Revell Company. Used by permission.

values are weighed in the balance and found wanting, and the supreme goods of life gain significance. Hartshorne says, "I get perspective and vision and motive; for in worship I realize intensely myself, my fellows, and God, and the meaning of this fellowship in our common human experience."²

Universality of Worship. The impulse to worship is native, not acquired. The prehistoric savage kneels before the mighty oak and offers it homage. The Indian seeks a lonely mountain and, silent, immovable, watching the panorama of sunrise and sunset, of light and darkness, worships the Great Mystery. The shepherds on the hills of Judea see a strange light and hear the songs of an angelic choir; seeking the stable in Bethlehem, they find there a Babe and, falling down upon their knees, they worship him.

The little child stops spellbound with the wonder of a robin's song or a cricket's chirp and spontaneously adores the Wonder-Maker. The character of the one who is worshiped and the content of the worship experience, the emotions aroused, and the ideals inspired may be the result of education, but worship itself is an "inward compulsion," an inner urge toward the divine.

The Object of Worship. The earliest ideas of God were obtained from man's contact with nature. Natural objects and phenomena were endowed with sensibility and were worshiped—the sun, the moon, the trees, cattle, the ocean, lakes, rivers. This was followed by belief in the immortality of spirits, the

²Hugh Hartshorne: "Childhood and Character," page 174, Copyright, The Pilgrim Press. Used by permission.

worship of ancestors, and all the attendant superstitions. Then emerged tribal deities and finally a national God.

The little child, if untaught, would have to travel a long road before arriving at the Christian concept of God. The God that he worships will be the result of the teaching which he receives in the home and the Church school, and upon that teaching will depend his ideas. Will he be a God of love, of patience, of kindness and gentleness, or a God of might, of anger, of vengeance, of narrow prejudice, a God to fear?

The Emotional Content of Worship. The emotional content of worship will depend upon the child's concept of God and also upon the surroundings and atmosphere at the moment of worship. The child who knows only a God of love and mercy will experience very different emotions in worship from the one who kneels before a God of wrath and vengeance. After wrong doing, the first child approaches his God in love and confidence while the second child is filled with fear and distrust.

The immediate mood which precipitates worship may be induced by some inner experience of grief or struggle or joy such as the one to which we have referred; or it may be inspired by the setting in which the child suddenly finds himself. The wonder of the night sky has brought many a little child to the feet of his Creator. The dim candle-lit mystery of the great Church, the rapt strains of sacred music, the hushed voices of other worshipers, stimulate reverence and faith and very quickly inspire the worshipful attitude.

Expression in Worship. Prayer is so indissolubly connected with the thought of worship that the mention of the one inevitably brings to mind the other. The emotions which control the individual at the moment of worship demand an outlet in some form of expression, and the most vital form is prayer. James Montgomery writes in an effort to define prayer:

“Prayer is the soul’s sincere desire,
Uttered or unexpressed—
The motion of a hidden fire
That kindles in the breast.

Prayer is the burthen of a sigh,
The falling of a tear—
The upward glancing of an eye,
When none but God is near.

Prayer is the simplest form of speech
That infant lips can try—
Prayer the sublimest strains that reach
The Majesty on high.”

The little child who possesses a concept of God and who feels the mood of worship will spontaneously address the Heavenly Father in prayer as he asks his earthly father for help or thanks him for favors.

From the days of the first religious observances, music has had a place in worship. Religious dances and songs often continued for hours as the worshiper reached an ecstasy of faith and joy. Not only songs of exaltation and praise, but hymns of majesty, beauty, and mournful dirges, found a place in expressing the heights and depths of feeling aroused in the worshiper. The little child naturally and simply creates his own hymns of praise when emotionally

stirred, or accepts those that the teacher presents. Mary sat with rapt and wondering eyes fixed upon the radiant Christmas tree in the Church school room. Nothing so marvelous had she ever seen as this tall tree glittering with red and yellow and blue lights and with silver baubles and shining tinsel. Long she looked upon it and then burst into praise: "O Christmas tree, O Christmas tree, we thank you for our Christmas tree!" The song was taken up by thirty little voices thrilling with the same experience, waiting only for the inspiration to song.

In every age men have offered gifts and have volunteered service to the God whom they worshiped. The gifts have been costly, not alone gold and frankincense and myrrh, but the blood of goats and sheep and not infrequently of the human victim. It was the Psalmist who had a clearer vision and sang, "For Thou desirest not sacrifice or else would I give it; Thou delightest not in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise." But Jesus gave the revelation of the gifts and the service which Christendom ever since has been offering when he said, "For I was an hungered and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me in; naked, and ye clothed me; I was sick, and ye visited me; I was in prison, and ye came to me. . . . Verily, I say unto you, 'Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.'" The little child delights to render his offering of pennies or dimes, to give his gift of food or clothes or toys to the sick, the poor, and the orphan. When he understands the love

of God and the need of his children, he overflows with sympathy, and no basket is large enough to hold what he would bestow.

For Discussion

1. Why has the Church not set a higher value on its children? A certain very wealthy church, for instance, has an annual budget of two thousand dollars (\$2,000) for its church school and of four thousand dollars (\$4,000) for its choir.
2. Is it possible for a child to make the right social adjustments and develop desirable moral and social attitudes and habits without any knowledge of God? Explain.
3. How do you justify the statement that the impulse to worship is not acquired?
4. Give an illustration from your own experience of the function of worship.
5. If the child were given no instruction, would he form any concept of God? If you think that he would, describe the probable concept.
6. Contrast the values of prayer, music, and giving as means of expression in worship.
7. What influence upon worship has atmosphere?

For Further Reading

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CHAPTER II

POSSIBILITIES FOR WORSHIP IN CHILD NATURE

EVERY child of beginner age possesses in greater or less degree certain inherited impulses, capacities, and tendencies which make some contribution to worship and the development of religion. This equipment is the result of age-long struggle and has been passed from generation to generation since the beginning of life.

Great individual differences are found in the manifestation of every characteristic or tendency, due to family inheritance and to age, race, sex, and environmental conditions including training. John is more fearful than James. This may be partly due to the fact that John is a year younger; he also has a mother who has many fears and a grandmother who is like the mother, while James lives in an atmosphere of courage and confidence. Mary is more rhythmic than Betty. Mary comes of a family of dancers and is an Italian by nationality, while Betty is of American parentage and possesses no forbears interested in the dance. Helen Marie evidences much more of the nurture response than Robert, probably because she is a girl and also because she has been supplied with dolls since she was an infant in arms and has been urged to mother them. All six of these children, however, show some degree of fear, rhythm, and nurture.

Some of the native equipment like fear needs

decided modification if it is to prove useful to the child in the present stage of civilization; all of it needs direction in order that desirable habits and attitudes may eventuate. It is the purpose here to give a brief description of some of the outstanding characteristics and to point out their connection with worship.

Fear Affects Worship. Many situations or stimuli arouse the fear response. Some of the more common fears are the fear of darkness, of solitude, of animals, of reptiles, of thunder and lightning, of strangers, of swiftly moving objects. Fears, such as the fear of ghosts, of devils, or the devil, of dragons, and of witches are the result of stories told by adults. Fears due to accident, or to a deliberate purpose to intimidate, are the fear of falling, of being struck, of the doctor, the policeman or the nurse.

The one who is fearful trembles, turns pale, clutches, nestles, cowers, hides, runs, or on occasion stands paralyzed. The heart beat is accelerated or greatly retarded—breathing in some cases seems to cease for the time being. So great is the disturbance that every function of the body is affected in intense fear. Children not only vary in the fear stimuli to which they respond, but also in their fear behavior. John's one fear seems to be of strangers and from them he always runs, while Helen is afraid of darkness, of animals, of thunder and lightning, and of swiftly moving objects. When frightened she clutches and nestles against the most familiar person or object in the room. The time of day, the degree of fatigue, those present, in fact, every modifying circumstance may change somewhat the fear response,

Fear has, as we have seen, its devastating aspect, but its service to the race is very clear. Wild beasts, storms, strange men, would have wreaked destruction more often than they have had it not been for the protection of fear which prompted flight or hiding. Fear in the modified form of caution, with the serious physical disturbances eliminated, is very essential in the preservation of life to-day. Even the "fear of the Lord," interpreted in the sense of the awe and reverence of the Lord, not as a paralyzing dread of an almighty despot, prevents our worship from degenerating into a trivial or jesting service and holds us back from disappointing the Father of us all who is the Creator of the universe.

However, in the past the error has not been in developing too little reverence for the Lord nearly so often as in engendering a terror of the Lord by dwelling too much upon his power and by painting him as a God of wrath and vengeance to the evil-doer. Such a picture has inevitably alienated the timid, dependent, imaginative beginner who needs a God of love and not a God of fear. Just enough should be taught about God, the Creator, and in such a way that the child's questions will be answered and his wonder about the phenomena of this universe deepened into reverence.

The child who fears needs kind and patient treatment. He should be shown by example and discussion the needlessness of foolish fears and how to control himself in relation to objects or people that are dangerous. The thought of God's love and protection will be a great assistance in overcoming fears that cannot be eliminated or avoided. Attitudes of

confidence in self, trust in God, courage in danger may be gradually cultivated as well as habits of self-reliant action, caution in dangerous situations, prayer in time of need.

Curiosity the Trail-Blazer to Truth. A little child described her own behavior when a parcel was delivered at the house a few days before Christmas. "I ran to the door and took the bundle. My mother wasn't at home; so I unwrapped the papers, and there was my new Christmas dolly that Santa Claus sent me. Now, you see what a little curiosity I am." That which is new, strange, unfamiliar, unknown rouses in the child interest, attention, the desire to investigate.

At first this investigation is carried on entirely by using the senses in looking, listening, smelling, tasting, feeling with hands and manipulating; but by the age of four the child is seeking information to gratify his curiosity by asking endless questions and insisting upon answers. When replies are sincere and supply as much knowledge as he is able to understand and use, curiosity is satisfied in one direction for the time being, but breaks out afresh elsewhere. As far as possible, the child should be helped to think out the answers to his own questions, and his investigations should be encouraged. To stifle or suppress curiosity in the young child is to deal a serious blow to scientific inquiry later and to hamper greatly the development of ability to think according to the child's capacity.

Curiosity does not withdraw on the threshold of the supernatural, but is exceedingly keen in connection with those phenomena and occurrences which border upon the mysterious. Many are the questions

as to the nature of birth, death, the hereafter and God as soon as the child has any experience which would provoke such inquiry, like the birth of a baby in the family, the death of a pet, or remarks overheard about heaven and God. He also wonders greatly concerning the source and behavior of the sun, the moon, the stars, rain, snow, vapor, the wind, the birds, animals, flowers and other natural objects, elements, and activities. Without such curiosity on the child's part, there would be no point of contact in teaching the child about spiritual things, no trail from the known to the unknown. A clear concept of God can be developed only in answer to a felt need for more knowledge about God. The child's questions are the parent's and teacher's lead in determining what he wants and what his limitations in understanding are. Awareness to problems, alertness in searching for a solution, discrimination in recognizing the right solution may be developed, and also the habit of acting intelligently in response to the information secured.

Individualism and the Search After God. All children, naturally and spontaneously demand what they want, when they want it, without thought of the convenience of the adults who serve them. Unconsciously they behave as if they owned the universe. It is well for their development that in their perfect helplessness as babes they have such an armor of defense; but as life progresses, this extreme individualism must, and is, tempered by the appearance of certain social tendencies and by the acquisition of social habits and attitudes. Otherwise, either they or society would be exterminated.

The consciousness of the babe is implicit with his social group; in other words, he does not recognize himself as an individual apart from other individuals. As language develops and the meaning of the words I, me, mine, and you, yours, thine, sink in; as he comes to comprehend through disapproval and approval, through reward and punishment, his own responsibility for his own acts, then there comes a day before infancy has passed into early childhood when intellectually he recognizes himself as an individual will or personality and when emotionally he feels the separation.

This recognition is essential to the search after God and to the yearning to be identified with the whole of society. All of life is an effort from the spiritual side to merge the individual will with God's will, to find peace and rest and hope and faith in the larger unity. Hartshorne, in "Childhood and Character," points out that just as the child's will should grow in coöperation, and not in opposition to, the other people in his social world, so also should he keep in harmony with God by learning to do as God wishes.

Social Tendencies, Their Influence Upon Social Conduct and Service. Long before the child can coöperate with others, he gives evidence of his dislike of solitude and his desire to be with people. He wants companionship, and he plays alongside of others until he is able to play with them. Children of four and five are capable of taking a further step and of coöperating to a certain extent and for a limited period in worship and also of coöperating in acts of love and helpfulness inspired through wor-

ship. According to their capacity, they are able to do God's will as they understand it; to work together with Him for the accomplishment of certain ends.

Love of Approval and Dislike of Disapproval.

Love of approval and dislike of disapproval are most important in forming social habits and attitudes. Habit formation not only demands repetition of the feeling, thought, or act which is to be habitual; but it also is facilitated by having satisfaction accompany or follow the desirable response and dissatisfaction, the undesirable response. Very soon the child looks to his social group for approval. If his mother smiles, speaks kindly, claps her hands, or pats his head when his conduct pleases her, the child naturally repeats, for he loves her approval. If the family laughs heartily when the small child sticks out his tongue at father or pulls the cat's tail, he will continue to perform these acts in all probability. If, on the other hand, disapproval is shown by displeasure in face and manner and tone of voice, or by isolating the child from a father who turns his back, or from the cat who is removed from the room, these forms of disapproval may be effective in halting further performances with tongue and tail.

As the child grows older, his social group widens to take in the teacher and children of his own age; their approval and disapproval come to play an important part in his character building. As soon as he develops a definite concept of God, of which he is altogether capable in the beginner department, God's approval and disapproval are matters of great concern to him. The parent or teacher must be exceedingly careful

not to convey the idea that God is a spy watching for misconduct, but only that the loving Father is disappointed as are mother and daddy when the child makes mistakes. It is in worship that he feels keenly any separation from God brought about through his wrongdoing. It is then that he is most likely to repent and that new purposes and ideals are born in line with God's approval.

Sympathy and Kindliness. As the child's experiences increase, he is more and more capable of feeling sympathy for others who are having similar experiences. He has been hungry, tired, cold, unhappy—he can feel himself into the situation of another who is hungry, tired, cold, or unhappy with the proper stimulus to the imagination. Experiences unique to adolescence and manhood he cannot, of course, appreciate intellectually or respond to emotionally. The sympathy of the four or five year old is so great often that the child weeps over the sorrows of a toy dog or an imaginary playmate. Coupled with sympathy in its effect upon behavior is kindliness. The child who experiences sympathy quickly responds to the kindly impulse of his own nature and needs only a suggestion from parent or teacher to do the helpful deed. He readily offers food, shelter, clothing, playthings to the person for whom his sympathy has been aroused. He assists that person in every way possible, even though he may never have met the individual before.

Love. Of all the responses of child life, no one is more important than love in its influence upon worship. In the beginning the infant loves no one, but as he experiences, day after day, the tender care

of his mother, as he takes his food, his bath, his play at her hands, as he feels the many pleasurable contacts with her body, he begins to respond to her personality by smiling, cooing, reaching out his hands and nestling as she approaches.

From the experience of love for mother to the experience of love for father by the same route of blessings received is but a step. Later each member of the family who confers benefits is taken into the inner circle and accepts moist tokens of baby's approval. Gradually the number of known pleasures increases and the group of those who contribute, widens. The contributions are not limited to material comforts; song, story, picture, play, happy chat, sympathetic understanding in time mean more to this growing self than physical possessions, dear as these are. As God becomes, in the child's thinking, the source of all his blessings, the Supreme Giver, a great love is stimulated, and this love and the gratitude that connects with it find satisfaction in worship of the loved object.

Helpfulness. It is exceedingly easy to secure service from the one who is in the loving mood. Each little child who loves his teacher should have opportunities to help her, else love may become a very selfish indulgence. The child who is expressing love and gratitude to God should have immediately the chance to do God's will in the deed of helpfulness. Children like to help, especially at four and five, and if their offers are accepted, a permanent habit of helpfulness may be formed. The service that is ungrudging, spontaneous, joyous, is the service prompted by love to God and man. The beginner

teacher should never for a moment forget her great opportunity to inspire such love and promote such service.

Nurture. By the time the child is four years of age, the responses of nurture are very evident. Dolls, pet animals, flowers, babies stimulate especially the nurturing responses. The child pats, cuddles, tends, cares for all such objects appealing to him as weaker or as needing his protection. Some children even bestow such mothering on mother or daddy, particularly if they are unwell or have been hurt. The nurture feeling in his own experience enables the child to understand far better the love of his parents for him and the love of God for his children. It is also an additional lever by which the teacher arouses his interest in helping others.

Creativity and the Creator. From the first uncontrolled fumbling of objects there develops in time a skillful manipulation which, in turn, leads to creativity. Whatever the medium, sand, clay, wood, paper, cloth, crayon or paint, the child expresses ideas and feeling through it. He lays on a few strokes of yellow and red and calls it a sunset. He crudely molds a ball of clay with protuberances at each end and names it a kitty. His own experience in being a source, a creator, of something, no matter how small or imperfect, helps him to understand and appreciate the masterful creativity of God and greatly adds to his reverence for the divine artist.

Love for the Beautiful Inspires Gratitude to God. Every little child shows evidence of an innate love for the beautiful. Glitter, pure bright color in clothing, flowers, jewels and ornaments, soft texture,

sweet odor, melody, appeal and give sincere pleasure if upon the child's plane. It is this æsthetic pleasure which often inspires gratitude to God, and it is this ability to respond to beauty that makes possible the appeal of architecture and music in worship.

Rhythm, Its Place in Worship. Rhythm is the first element in music to which the child makes a response. To the repetition in verse, to the rhythm of song or instrumental music, he reacts with the voice, the swaying of the body, the clapping of the hands, the tapping of the feet, the run or the gallop or the skip. A great amount of pleasure in worship is secured through the rhythmic appeal of the music and the child's response to it. The very experience of reacting rhythmically with others induces a feeling of harmony and happiness.

Imitative and Imaginative Play Function in Worship. The early imitations of children consist of cries and sounds unconsciously repeated; later there is a conscious repetition of single acts, as when the small child carefully copies the way daddy walks with a cane or the way mother uses the broom; still later, acts are put together in a series and a long process carried through. The child not only imitates the doing of things, but also the attitudes and manners of those around him. He snarls at the maid, sniffs at the food upon his plate, and turns up his nose at the little ragged boy in the alley, or he does just the opposite of these things according to his patterns. The more he admires an individual the more carefully he copies that individual. The element of imagination enters into imitative play so that, for the time being, the child is really the one that he is

imitating. Moreover, acts are combined to make new and marvelous plots.

It is not difficult to see how imitative and imaginative play functions in worship and religious development. The imagination of the child takes the images and ideas of sense experience and weaves a satisfying background for the unseen world. God becomes a personality created in the image of father or grandfather, the statue of Moses or the picture of Santa Claus and his abiding-place acquires a definite location, walls, a roof and all the habiliments of human dwellings. As God becomes real to him through the description of his acts and attitudes, the child imitates his Greater Father after the fashion that he copies well-known daddy. It is ever the story of the Great Stone Face.

Suggestibility and Credulity Afford Great Opportunity. The beginner child is suggestible and extremely credulous. The teacher is cross and nervous; soon all the children seem to be, by some strange magic, cross and excited. The teacher says that she knows Bobby will have his coat on in a minute and a half. Bobby has no notion of putting on his coat before the suggestion is made, but so powerful is its effect that in less than a minute and a half the coat is on and buttoned. The teacher tells the children that unless they open their mouths wide the nurse will shake them. Although the nurse is a kind and harmless woman, the credulous children shiver with fear as she approaches. Great is the power of teacher and parent over this suggestible, credulous little beginner, and the more shame to them if they abuse it. Because of these characteris-

tics, it is easy to lay the foundation of wholesome religious attitudes and sane belief, and it is equally easy to stimulate fears and superstitions that can never be entirely eradicated in their influence on the emotional development.

Wonder Leads to Worship. That which is strange or unknown arouses the curiosity of the child. If, upon investigation, the mysterious aspect of the object or phenomena remains, or if upon first presentation that aspect is strange, the child is filled with a feeling that we call wonder. The stars are distant, they shine without our ability to turn them on or off, they shine on night after night. What are they? Who put them there? Man has been wondering for countless ages, and each new generation of children wonders. The snow falls. Each little flake is different. It is noiseless. It is soft on the face like a kiss. From whence does it come? Who sends it down, and why to-day? The little child stands with eyes pressed against the windowpane and wonders. It is certainly true that God draws near as he wonders. It is only a step from wonder to worship, for the answer to the riddle of life is God. Every miracle endues Him afresh with majesty and glory and fills with reverence the waiting child.

For Discussion

1. Discuss the following statements sometimes made: (a) All fears are unnatural to young children and are engendered by adults. (b) Fear is useless in the religious development of the child.

2. Make a list of questions often asked by young children, which might afford opportunity for religious instruction.

3. Give instances from your observation to show that a child of four or five likes approval; that he is capable of co-operation; of sympathy; of loving helpfulness,

4. How may the introduction of pets or plants in the Church school be justified; of materials like paper, clay, crayon?

5. How have you seen young children express their love for beautiful objects? What relation has the love of beauty to the worship service?

6. From your own observation, give instances to show that little children tend to imitate the habits and manners of those around them; that they are credulous and suggestible. How may the teacher of religion make use of these characteristics?

7. What is the relation of wonder to worship?

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CHAPTER III

THE BEGINNER'S CONCEPT OF GOD

THE little child has no untutored idea of God. Words that he hears people speak, glances the meaning of which he intuitively fathoms, interpretations of his experiences with men and things, answers to questions oft repeated—in all of these ways he gathers knowledge about God. His concept of God at four or five will vary as much from some other child's concept as their environment and training have differed.

Differing Ideas About God. One pictures God seated on a bank of rolling clouds in the distant sky, a kindly old man who dispenses favors as he drops snow and rain. Another child conceives of him as a king with a crown of gold upon his head seated on a throne in a magnificent castle in a mysterious place called heaven. "Do they use wall paper or calcimine in heaven?" asked one very literal little soul. Sometimes the king is fierce in his wrath, and always he is powerful in his might—a ruler before whom a wee mite of humanity might well quail. Other children have thought of a God who was a glorified Santa, or a wonderful magician, or a beneficent fairy, a God who could raise babies from the earth with one sweep of his hand or make bad little boys good with one turn of his head. One little girl with such a conception expressed her disapproval in no uncertain terms upon hearing that she had a

baby sister: "God, why didn't you bring me a little brother? You know I like boys better than girls."

The Danger in These Concepts. These illustrations serve to show the concrete way in which a child thinks of God as well as the danger to a developing religious experience in certain misconceptions. A distant God, no matter how kindly, is not likely to function vitally in the child's life, to get any grip upon his developing purposes, to influence his conduct. A God who is an object of fear either as a king or an ogre affects behavior only through compulsion, is evaded and avoided whenever possible, and serves to cast a dark shadow of dread as the sense of personal responsibility dawns in the mind of the child. "It's bad enough," said one little boy, "to have Shep (the dog) tagging you all the time, without having God after you too."

A God who is a doting wondermaker has perhaps the most pernicious influence of all upon action and faith. The child becomes constantly more self-seeking and more unreasonable in his demands. He makes no effort in his own behalf, but leaves the reformation of himself to God. When miracles are not performed, when he fails to get the moon for which he has cried or continues to scratch the baby's face and be spanked, he decides that God is a fraud or a traitor and loses faith.

The Concept Best Adapted to Meet the Need of the Beginner. The God that this child deeply needs, with his vivid imagination, his ready fear, his sense of dependence, his desire for love, his imitation of a pattern, is the Father of all, who is wise and good and loving and just. He is the great Father who

knows how to give good gifts to his children, but withholds often that which would injure. He is just to all; he sends his rain and his sunshine alike on the rich and the poor, the good and the bad, for he loves them all. Like father or mother, he is pleased when the child does well and grieved when he does ill. He expects every person to do the best that he can every day; and that is the only way his approval can be won.

Experience with Parents. If this is the knowledge of God that will stimulate the love of the beginner child, that will eliminate fear and elicit trust, that will provide a worthy incentive for good conduct and a desirable pattern for imitation, how shall this knowledge be acquired? To know God is not the matter of a moment or the result alone of having so much information furnished by an adult or another child. It takes time to know anything, and it requires living. The child must find out through his own experience and by his own activity that the things which we tell him are true. He must discover for himself that God is wise and good and loving and just. All that the teacher or parent can do is to put him in the way of learning, to supply the environment including fructifying ideas.

If the love of parent is the richest symbol of the love of God, then the first step in knowing God is to know an earthly father or mother who seeks to live the God life. The child's first contacts are with his mother and father. Day by day he experiences their tender care. They provide food, warmth, baths, sleep, shelter, protection, happy play. If these blessings are forthcoming every day in an

orderly way, if the atmosphere of love pervades the home, the little child will unconsciously feel love toward them in time and express it by the upreaching of little arms and the clinging caress. If gradually he learns to express this growing love of his through doing, even though the services are small in the beginning, he is well upon the road that leads to an understanding of the nature of divine love.

If no such experience with the love of a father or mother is the lot of the child, then the beginner teacher will have to build up the concept of a human father through vicarious experience. Through stories, through contributions of the other children about their parents, through her own love and special interest in the child, she can give him experience with love that is parental. Many a little child appreciating the quality of such love on the teacher's part has said, "I wish you were my mother," or has involuntarily called that teacher "mother."

The child's love for his parents gives everything they do significance for him. If grace is spoken at table, if prayers are said at his bedside in the morning and at night, he receives an impression through the tones of voice, the posture of body, the expression of face at these times that is different from any other impression he has had. Since he is very suggestible, he early feels God at these times through the reverence and devotion of his elders, and being very imitative, he soon bows his head and closes his eyes. Some day he hears the word "God"; it is repeated day after day until it becomes a familiar sound. Mother or father explains, as he becomes old enough to converse with, that God is good, that he gives the

bread and milk, the pretty flower, the baby brother. God, he is told, is his Heavenly Father who gave him mother and daddy and baby and who takes care of them all. He feels love for God who gives him all these gifts, and his own love is reënforced through the suggestion of father and mother who love so much more fully. Little Jean, at three years of age, prayed her first prayer in terms of her own family experiences. She apostrophized the deity as, "O God, Heavenly Father, O God, Heavenly Mudder, O God, Heavenly Budgie."

"Father" is a concept already potent with meaning for this little child; "love" is a word whose magic he has experienced; "gifts" are the medium of expressing love in his home; "service" for one another is the daily custom. Many are the points of contact in forming the concept of God, the Unseen Father of a universe which is the home of all his children. Before the teacher of beginners can hope that the knowledge of God the Father is the possession of every child in her class she must make sure that at least through living in the Church school the meaning of love, of gifts, of service is clear.

Obstacles Encountered. The fact that the Father God is unseen presents a great obstacle to some children who have an insatiable longing to touch him, to see him, to hear him speak. However, they have experienced love, and they know that they cannot see it although they feel it. They will admit too that they love father or mother or teacher or playmate when these dear ones are out of sight and beyond touch or sound; and they will with much assurance declare that they are loved by these absent

friends. It is not impossible, then, to feel the love of God and to respond to that love even though the Great Father is behind the veil. "God must be like my father," said one little lad, "only a little bigger."

Another problem that the understanding of love helps to solve is the one that Mary raised when she went on a visit to Janesville: "Why, mother, do we have to say our prayers here? Isn't God in Downers Grove?" As the family did not cease to love their friends in Downers Grove and as the friends there did not cease to love them when they went to Janesville, so God, like love, goes with us everywhere, is with us everywhere. Even Mary begins to understand, although she is only four years old.

Experience With Nature. God as the source of nature is no less necessary as an explanation of the wonderful out-of-door world than God as the Father of men. Every day the child asks some question that carries the patient parent or teacher back to God as a first cause unless that parent misses his great opportunity and answers as did a certain mother when the child pointed to a tumult of waves sweeping into shore. "What's 'em?" queried the child. "Waves," said the mother. "What's waves?" asked the child. "Waves are waves," laconically replied the mother. The beginner child asks what and who and why and where and occasionally how, although he is usually satisfied with little explanation of process. "Where do the clouds come from?" "Who makes it snow?" "Why does it rain?" "What makes the rose red?" "Why don't the stars fall down?" "Where is the wind?" "Why can't I play with the moon?" "Where do little babies come from?" "Who made

God?" "How did God make the trees?" "Who helped God make everything?" Endless questions demanding endless answers lead back in the end to God the Creator of all the wonderful world which mother and father and teacher sometimes have to confess they know very little about. All the while the child is carrying his first concept of God the Father who made the beautiful, wonderful world for his children to enjoy and who every day evidences his love afresh in new miracles of discovery.

Not only does the child need to find God the Creator through questions, but through his own small efforts at creating. He plants a few seeds and like the little boy whom Mrs. Mumford tells about, the little boy in the mission who had helped to tend a hyacinth bulb into blossom, he reverently touches the leaves and whispers, "God did it, lady."³ Any child who has the experience of waiting on sun and moisture to stir life in bulb or seed comes readily to believe in an unseen power greater than himself who performs the miracle. Children who wait to see the marvel of a butterfly emerge from a cocoon into which they have seen a caterpillar disappear, or wee weak birds hatch from tiny eggs, or fruit grow where blossoms have been, cannot but feel the presence of mysterious power which has its own times and seasons, its own wonderful laws.

Even the beginner has some negative experiences with nature. His little pet dies, the worms eat the roses, the cat catches the robin. It would be a foolish parent or teacher and a sentimental one who would

³Edith E. Read Mumford: "The Dawn of Religion in the Mind of a Child."

try to extract all the sting of such experiences. Let the child find out the cause back of every such effect, the broken law, the failure of man to do his part in keeping God's world, or the mistake of something naturally good in the wrong place. Through these experiences the child may come to feel and to find his share in working with God to make the world more beautiful and happy. Where it is impossible to find any mitigating circumstances, then faith in the goodness and love of God may transcend the obvious loss of the moment, as when the leaves fall and the flowers die in the autumn to make way for another spring. "If winter comes, can spring be far behind?"

Experience in Doing as God Wills. The child who is always receiving gifts, always accepting help, always gaining impressions through his contacts with God's goodness and love manifested toward him, may become a believing child, but a very self-centered one. He needs to realize within himself the nature of God by becoming like him. Only as he loves and serves unselfishly according to the best that is in him can he know what God is like and can he enter into God's purposes according to his capacity. He has to be told, therefore, as many times as occasion demands that not only mother and teacher are happy when he does his best work, but that God the Father is pleased also, that God knows when he tries his "hardest best" and is glad.

Dorothy, when she was four years old, slapped her mother one night. She afterwards said she was sorry, but when she knelt for her little prayer at bedtime she covered her face and prayed: "Dear God, I put my head under the cover so you will not

see a naughty child and look sad. I won't slap mother any more if you won't look sad." To identify God with the right in human behavior and with the best in one's own nature and to learn to act according to his purpose even as a little child is the greatest promise for a life of growing power and vision and deepening religious experience.

For Discussion

1. How does the little child gain ideas about God?
2. Can you recall your own childhood conception of God? Trace the various ideas in it to their probable sources.
3. Point out the dangers in the concept of a distant God; a God who is an object of fear; a God who is a magician.
4. Suggest the concept which in your estimation most nearly meets the needs of the kindergarten child.
5. If the child does not gain through the home experience the meaning of the words "father," "love," "service," how can the teacher in the Sunday school substitute for this experience?
6. How would you answer the little child's question, "Why can't I see God?"
7. What does contact with nature add to the child's concept of God?
8. A pest of moths was destroying the elm trees in a certain city. The authorities asked the coöperation of all citizens including the children in destroying the cocoons. One woman violently objected and said that it was wicked to teach children to molest God's beautiful butterflies. Do you agree with this point of view? How would you help the child to meet the negative aspects of nature?
9. What deeper understanding of the nature of God can the child gain by trying to do His will?
10. If you have contact with a child of kindergarten age, keep a record of the questions which he asks and note how many of them relate to his discovery of God and the meaning of life.

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CHAPTER IV

THE ATMOSPHERE FOR WORSHIP

IT is true that one may worship God in the heat of the day's work, on the street with its teeming crowds and rushing automobiles, in the factory with its whirring machines, or in the office with its clacking typewriters. It is equally true that the atmosphere of these places does not conduce to worship, that one worships in spite of and not because of the suggestions of the environment. Too often those who live in the midst of such noise, bustle, and general confusion never meditate, never pray. Life speeds on, a continual round of busy-ness with no element of worship in it, and prayer takes place only when tremendous need evicts a cry for help.

Nature Settings. How different the effect produced by nature! The still forest with its majestic trees, the great plains with their canopy of sky, the mighty ocean piling up roaring foam upon the shore, the heavens bedight with starry wonders—all of these and a thousand variations of them bring man to his knees in wonder, in reverence, in worship. What contributes to the worshipful mood? Great space, distance, quiet, order, system, beauty. Nature in her wilder moments excites, thrills, awes, but except as she calls forth the prayer of terror she does not inspire to worship as in times of harmony and peace.

The Cathedral. The nearest approach to an environment for worship that approximates the

vaulted arches of the trees with sunlight or moonlight filtering through is the beautiful cathedral. Elizabeth Harrison has said, "The vast stone cathedral with its pointed windows and perpendicular lines and soaring spires points upward to God like an aspiring soul that is seeking to rise from earth to heaven; and man can scarcely approach without worshipping." The little child also worships. I remember taking a group of kindergarten children into the church one Easter to hear the organ play. Their chattering little voices ceased when we entered the big auditorium, and the hush almost rivaled the silence of the great church.

When to the vastness of the cathedral, to its symmetry of line, its balance of part, and its stillness we add the glory of color, the setting is complete. Is it not Ruskin who says, "Of all God's gifts to the sight of man, color is the holiest, the most divine, the most solemn?" There are few churches in America which so well exemplify the influence of color in worship as the chapel at West Point. Those of you who have climbed the bluff above the Hudson and have entered the long narrow building with the gray towers when the afternoon sunlight was flooding through the high and narrow stained windows and illuminating brilliantly the double row of gorgeous flags suspended from the ceiling will never forget the uplift of soul as you reveled in the great splashes of diffused color which stained the stone benches and the marble altar. The child is most sensitive to pure, brilliant color and to glitter. His first appreciation of beauty is in response to color, and worship of the beauty maker, the Sun God, follows instinctively.

The Beginner Room. It is not possible to make the beginner room in the Church school a cathedral, and if it were possible, it would not be desirable. A cathedral is too vast, too awe-inspiring, to afford a place of meeting for timid, small people who need to make social adjustments with their fellows and to meet God as a loving Father before they worship him as the Creator of millions of worlds and billions of men. The place where they worship should possess in modified form the essential characteristics of the beautiful church, but it should be more homelike than the church.

Factors in Securing Atmosphere

Space. This room should have space enough for the children to move about freely and with no sense of crowding. It should be remembered that it takes for the child of four or five about twice as much space in which to turn as for the adult; he has as yet very imperfect control of his machine. If other children touch him in moving, or worse still are pushed against him, he rebels by striking and protesting, whereupon an atmosphere of irritation is created that is antagonistic to the worshipful mood. The room for twenty-five children should be from twenty-two to twenty-four feet in width and from thirty-two to thirty-six feet in length with a ceiling height of twelve or thirteen feet. There ought to be at least fifteen square feet of floor space and two hundred cubic feet of air space for each child. Not only does the space and ceiling height prevent crowding and poor air, but the reaction of vision to distance contributes to creating the right atmosphere for worship.

Quiet. Another important characteristic is quiet or restfulness. This should be secured by eliminating all unnecessary noises and distractions such as flapping shades, a creaking piano stool, whispering adults, and scraping chairs. If battleship linoleum is used for the floor or a rug of sanitary material, the room will be decidedly quieter; if a hardwood floor has to be used, rubber tips may be placed on the chair legs. Restfulness may be obtained not only by eliminating distressing sights and sounds, but also by the colors used for the large wall spaces, ceiling, and floors, and for the body of the chairs, tables, and other furniture. A room for beginners, unless it is unusually sunny and warm, should use buff or ivory for walls, with cream for ceiling and soft-toned browns for woodwork, floor, and furniture, although these latter may also be in ivory if practicable. A very sunny, warm room may be decorated in a light gray-green, with white ceiling and gray or green flooring, and ivory or gray woodwork and furniture.

Beauty. The element of beauty is secured by the wise use of pure, vivid color and the free introduction of sunlight. One fourth to one sixth of the floor space is a correct proportion for window space, depending, of course, on the degree of illumination procurable. For health little children need the sunlight, but they also need it if the room is to seem beautiful to them. The bright light is required to bring out the spots of brilliant color here and there; the child does not appreciate dim, subdued color and dreads a dark or semi-dark room. "When God puts so much sunshine out doors, why can't we have some of it here?" said a six-year-old one day on entering

a basement Sunday school room. In the buff and brown room, orange, gold, yellow, red, pink are especially attractive and may be used in vases, decoration for curtains, flowers, and sometimes in simple borders for tables and chairs. In the green and gray room blue, violet, rose, and white are lovely.

Beauty is also secured through order and good arrangement of the various pieces of furniture and the articles or objects in use. "A place for everything and everything in its place" is a good motto if the room is to be orderly and if there is to be the feeling of harmony and balance. If furniture and objects are put where they are convenient for service and where they are related rightly to the wall spaces, the windows, doors, and the other articles in the equipment, the result will be satisfying and will contribute to produce a restful, happy atmosphere.

Comfort. No matter how beautiful the room is, however, the children will not worship readily if they are uncomfortable physically. Chairs of the correct height and construction are necessary, so that when the child sits well back in the chair his body is supported properly and his feet rest flat upon the floor. Chairs should not be placed too close together so that there is a sense of crowding when the group is seated. The temperature of the room should be between 65 and 70 degrees; the direct sunlight should be controlled by shades so that it never falls on the child's face or table. The ventilation should keep the air moist and moving. If these physical conditions are not right, there will not be the proper atmosphere for worship. The children will fidget, fuss with one

another, or divide their attention with the displeasing feature whatever it may be.

Pictures, Flowers, Pets. The beauty of the environment as well as its appeal to the child is greatly enhanced by a few well-chosen pictures, flowers, and an occasional pet. These interesting objects make the room childlike and homelike. They stimulate curiosity, appreciation, tenderness, gratitude. Such pictures as "The Good Shepherd," by Plockhorst; "Jesus Blessing Little Children," by the same artist; "The Madonna of the Chair," by Raphael; and "The Christ Child," by Murillo, are typical of the best in sacred art for the child's appreciation. Other pictures from secular art, as for instance, Millet's "Feeding Her Birds" and "Bringing Home the New-Born Calf," or Holmes's "Can't You Talk," are also very appropriate. Cut flowers and, in the winter season, a potted plant bring that part of nature which most stimulates the æsthetic in little children; the odor and the color are both fascinating. A pair of doves, a canary bird, a few baby chickens, a rabbit, goldfish, kittens, tiny puppies—all of these have visited a certain beginner department from time to time and have inspired some of the most ardent prayers ever uttered there.

Dolls, Toys, and Blocks. It is also desirable to have in the room some of the play equipment which interests the child of this age and suggests worth-while activities to him. Building blocks such as the Hennessey or the Patty Hill from which houses, beds, tables, barns, sheepfolds, churches may be constructed, a sand table with its fascinating possibilities for illustrating stories and expressing play ideas, a doll

corner with one or more dolls, a doll bed or crib, tiny chairs and a table—these play toys will stimulate activities and create situations in the early part of the session, as well as later when used for guided handwork, that offer the best opportunities for spontaneous worship. If the child out of his play life, which is the most real part of life to him or perhaps we ought to say all of life, approaches God for help in solving his problems with neighbors and materials, if he thanks God for that which brings him happiness, then God is functioning in his life in so vital a way that he begins to have meaning and purpose.

Music. A study of the atmosphere for worship would not be complete without the mention of music. Every beginner room should contain a sweet-toned piano in perfect tune or a good victrola. Religious music from the folk or from modern artists who have high standards, if simple in composition and played to emphasize the rhythm and the melody, will more often than any other single element induce the worshipful mood. The little child does not listen long to any musical selection, and he listens better if his attention is called to it and some words are spoken about its nature, as “Do you think of the canary bird who sang for us, when Miss Smith plays this piece?” or “The music is telling us to speak to our Father God.”

The Teacher. The largest factor, however, in the creation of atmosphere is the teacher. The little child watches the face of the teacher, he listens for her voice, he copies her manner of acting and her way of speaking. “Where,” said one little child, “did Miss C—— get her happy face?” Before his mother

could answer, he continued: "I know. God gave her his smiles." The face that is cheery, the voice that has a quiet, reverent note in its low, sweet tone, the manner that is friendly and playful but serious withal—this is the combination in outward form that makes for the atmosphere in which the child readily worships.

No clever disguise of appearance can, however, deceive a child. The teacher must feel as she looks, or the deception will never carry, as all true teachers of children know. The aching heart has to bury its dead before the teacher dares approach the gay, loving group. They will fathom her sorrow and inquire in anxious tones: "What's the matter, teacher? Did somebody hurt you?" If she is nervous and worried, the children will feel that condition. Hortense Orcutt tells of an experience one time in New York City, where she was teaching a mission kindergarten. Delays in traffic brought her to the school after the children had arrived. As she walked up to the door, she inwardly resolved to assume a smiling countenance. The children gathered about her for the conference which always preceded the day's play. Tony began to sniff. "Teacher smells something; she not pleased," he said. Other children nodded affirmatively and looked suspiciously at their mates. These little children had sensed that Miss Orcutt was not happy, was cross; and they guessed, knowing her emphasis upon cleanliness, that she was disturbed because some children had come to school dirty.

The teacher then must be cheerful, at peace with the world, and at one with God in order to create for

these suggestible little children an atmosphere in which they can pray; and she must desire to worship the Father in all sincerity and truth. She must be able to approach him with the unfeigned gladness of a child and to worship herself with the simplicity, the humility, the eager seeking which Jesus had in mind when he said, "Unless you become as little children you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven."

For Discussion

1. Do the following statements seem true or false to you? (a) Worship can take place anywhere. (b) Nature in her angry moods is most provocative of prayer. (c) The great cathedral irresistibly invites to worship. (d) The sun was naturally man's first God, and every child tends to repeat the experience.

2. Why is space a contributing factor to the worshipful mood?

3. Suggest three ways of making the beginner room quiet and restful.

4. Criticize the following room for beginners: It accommodates thirty-six children each Sunday and is eighteen feet by twenty feet. It is in a basement and has only half windows. The walls and ceiling are a dull gray; the furniture, hangings, and rugs are a vivid scarlet with a yellow and green design. The piano is piled high with sheet music and hymn books, and there are several pictures of former pastors on the walls.

5. Fill in the blank spaces below with appropriate words. To secure the best results in the worship service, the chairs for beginners should be of height and construction. The temperature should be between and degrees. The sunlight should be controlled by, and the air should be kept and

6. Make a list of six religious pictures which will inspire beginners to worship.

7. Characterize the teacher who best creates the atmosphere of worship.

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CHAPTER V

THE PRAYER EXPERIENCE OF THE BEGINNER

PRAYERS, beautiful in form, inspiring in content, may be found in any prayer book—prayers which once stirred deeply the emotions of those who uttered them; prayers which were the outcry of distress, the anthem of joy, the overflow of gratitude, the appeal of sympathy. How often are these prayers repeated by worshipers with sincere feeling and appreciation of thought? How many times are they murmured incoherently like a potion that must be drained for safety's sake, a shibboleth that has absolving value?

Even less intelligent frequently is the beginner's first experience with prayer. Baby lips repeat the "Lord's Prayer," or the old family favorite "Now I Lay Me," with no glimmer of the real reason for praying, with no understanding of the meaning of the prayer, without any sense of the presence of God or desire to communicate with him. Under the dictate of the parent or through imitation the prayer is obediently repeated at best, or at the worst fearfully and defiantly said lest a greater evil befall. These performances are not prayer even though they occur in God's house. The requirements of real prayer are much more nearly met by the child who raises his voice to the unknown God in an instinctive terror of the wild beast that lurks in the dark, or in an urgent demand for a glittering toy.

Basis in Knowledge of God. Prayer on its lowest level is the superstitious outcry for material goods or protection from physical danger; on the highest plane it is intelligent communion with a Being who embodies one's highest ideals, who realizes for the individual and the race one's farthest vision, whose essence and whose goals are spiritual. Unless the child is to remain on the plane of the savage as far as his experience with real prayer is concerned, he must have help in forming his concept of God. Without information, without knowledge it is impossible to form a concept of any human being. As grown-ups we are not remotely interested in the most important person in the community until we have some facts about him; and we could only make a stereotyped appeal to him for help in the event of need provided our information had been scanty and unreliable.

The task of the child in gaining an understanding of God that will make intelligent communion a possibility is very great. He has at four comparatively few images and ideas. He has been enormously busy gathering information concerning the world about him by means of his senses, by actual contacts with people and things. He must use his knowledge of that which he has sensed in gaining an understanding of the immaterial. In recombining images and ideas to interpret the unseen he makes mistakes which seem absurd and amusing to the adult.

Peggy at five years of age was greatly confused by the terms Lord, Christ, and God. She asked if the Lord was the son of God, and was answered affirmatively. She then asked if Christ was the son of God,

and was answered positively again. "Well," she commented, "that surprises me. I never knew God had twins before." Sometimes the child appreciates her own limited knowledge as did Dorothy. She was five and a half when one morning she remarked, "Mother, I saw God in the clouds, but he didn't have his light on." "You mean the light about the head dear; it is Jesus who always has that in pictures," the mother replied. "You may be right," Dorothy said; "you see, I'm not very well acquainted with either one of them."

Summary of Desirable Ideas. We have discussed in an earlier chapter how the child may come to know God through experience with loving parents and teachers, through nature, through questions, and through living according to God's purpose as a child. Miss Whitley suggests the elements entering into a desirable concept of God in "A Study of the Little Child": "God is an unseen Companion, a Father, a Friend. He can be talked to freely, but always with respect, for he is so great and wonderful. He likes to have us tell him things, for he is always interested in his children. He gives us many things, especially help; so we must remember to thank him. He is sorry, and it grieves him when we do wrong. He has commands for us, just as our parents have; and commands for them too, since they are also his children. He belongs to us all, but does not have favorites, for he loves justice. He has work to do, and asks us to help him in that work; and when we do we are all happy together. Some of his plans we can't understand yet, but as we get older and wiser, and especially as we try to help him as far as we can, we shall

understand better. He loves beautiful and true things, particularly in ways we act.”⁴

Basis in Love for God. The child must have some knowledge concerning a God of such a nature, presenting him as a loving Father, before he can feel love toward God and faith in him. The finest of potential friends is not loved until his characteristics are known or some of his deeds are observed or his personal kindnesses are experienced. The beginner is capable of a great love for the stranger when that stranger is revealed to him. Little Dorothy, not quite four, had been attending Sunday school for a few months when her mother helped her to buy a book for the teacher’s Christmas gift. Dorothy was not well and could not come to Sunday school to present the gift until a month after Christmas. The mother told the teacher that during this time Dorothy slept with the book, showed it to every guest, rocked it, holding it tight against her heart. It became very soiled, and the mother suggested that another book be substituted. Dorothy with tears in her eyes held it close. “But that’s the one we choosed for Miss Johnson, isn’t it?” she said.

If each joy of the child’s life, each need met, each dear friend is suggested as directly or indirectly tied up with God’s good plan for the child, he will gradually evidence warm affection for the Greater Father and come to feel a sense of dependence and friendship that will make spontaneous prayer possible. As soon as we feel love for another, we desire to commu-

⁴Mary Theodora Whitley: “A Study of a Little Child,” chapter 5, page 103. Copyright, The Westminster Press. Used by permission.

nicate with that friend, to know him better through personal sharing of ideas and ideals. We think of him when he is absent and like to feel that he is thinking of us and with us. It is not otherwise with the love of God. The little child who appreciates the love of the Great All-Father naturally and sincerely talks to him of that which is of the greatest interest or value, confides in him as in mother or father.

Ministry of Prayer. As love and faith prompt prayer, so the prayer experience in turn begets greater love and faith if properly directed. Kirkpatrick has said that the child is a natural little beggar, and his begging proclivities are evident even in prayer. He easily falls into the habit of praying the prayer of petition for himself more frequently than any other. Sometimes such prayers contain a note of thanksgiving and a request for others beside himself, but more often they are selfish, unconsciously and unintentionally so. Unless the child is early led to realize that he may ask whatever he wishes of the Father, but that God gives or withholds as is best, both love and faith are apt to suffer shipwreck when requests are not promptly granted. Prayers of thankfulness are not only lacking in this danger, but they stimulate happiness, a sense of well-being, and an overflowing gratitude. They make the little child aware of his blessings and rich in the knowledge.

Characteristics of Spontaneous Prayer. The child is likely to have a concrete image of God, and he thinks of him entirely as a personal God in relation to his individual needs. His prayers bear evidence of this fact. They are concrete, specific, individualistic. Tommie was between three and four years of

age when he went with his mother to look at toys. He became very enamored of a little wooden duck. He watched it and wished for it a long time. The rest of the day he played quietly at home. When he knelt to say his prayer that night, he spoke to God about the duck: "O Lord, I went to town this morning, and I saw the cutest little duck. It was the cutest little duck. I wish I had that little duck. O Lord, keep one eye on him to-night." Marion aged four prayed: "God bless daddy, mother, and Teddy. Send me a baby brother, a stick of candy, and a train." Helen Margaret was almost six. She had a beloved doll, Josephine, whose hair the puppy dog had chewed off. She prayed at bedtime: "Dear God, I want poor Josephine to grow some hair. She needs it very bad." The mother and teacher must expect the child's prayers to be specific and individualistic at this age, since the chief joy of life is in receiving; but as knowledge of God increases and unselfish interest is developed others will be gradually included, and prayers will come to evidence more desire to be helpful and to do what God and parents wish.

Ruth was only four when she prayed at the time of her mother's illness, "Dear God, make my mamma never to be sick again, and make me a good girl so she won't be sick." The nurse had told Ruth that she must be quiet so that her mother could get well, and Ruth had been careless and slammed doors that day; hence the petition. Martha Jean at five lost her little dog Scrappy, who was run over by an automobile. At first she could not be consoled, but her mother persuaded her to bury Scrappy in a little bed of earth among the garden flowers. After Scrappy

had been covered, Martha Jean fell on her knees, folded her hands and said softly: "Please, God, you are looking at us. Mother said you love dogs and kitties and little girls and boys. Please, God, keep Scrappy warm and let him smell the flowers and tell him that I love him."

Donald was five when one day at kindergarten Ruth brought graham crackers for all the children. Just as the teacher was about to bow her head for grace, Donald rose and said, "Thank you, God, for the crackers and please give Ruth everything she wants."

All the prayers of the beginner are short. The span of attention is short. Prayer demands a concentration which is difficult for the child to give, because the one to whom he is speaking is not present to the senses. As a rule he feels intensely only one or two issues at a time, so that spontaneously he is not apt to include many separate items. When the adult makes a lengthy prayer he loses the child's interest and attention and fails to help him. The child's prayers are likely to be vocal, for he naturally speaks as he thinks. It is therefore to be expected that he will pray aloud anywhere or at any time that the need or desire impels him.

Individual Variations. Not only are beginners as a group subject to the characteristics in praying to which reference has been made, but individual children from four to six vary greatly in their capacity for spontaneous prayer. The child who is unemotional, who lacks in imagination will not pray as early as the child who is emotional and who possesses a wealth of imagery for his age. The child who is very

independent and self-reliant does not feel the need for prayer as does the timid little fellow who lacks confidence in his own ability. As Mrs. Mumford says, "The period of response (in prayer) varies according to the fineness and depth of the child's moral nature and the fullness of his spiritual imagination."⁵

For Discussion

1. Why are prayers often meaningless?
2. How may the little child learn to pray with understanding? With a sense of dependence and friendship?
3. Which form of prayer is the more natural, petition or thanksgiving? Which brings the greater happiness?
4. Illustrate, from your own observation if possible, the statement that the child's prayers are concrete, specific, and individualistic.
5. Does the beginner ever spontaneously include others in his prayers? Can you cite any proof of this fact?
6. The prayers of a beginner are in length, with issues, likely to be
7. State two individual differences of kindergarten children with respect to spontaneous prayers.

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⁵Edith E. Reed Mumford: "The Dawn of Religion in the Mind of a Child," chapter 2, page 20. Longmans, Green and Company. Used by permission.

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CHAPTER VI

GUIDING THE BEGINNER IN PRAYER

FINDING his relationship to God, learning to feel at home in the divine presence, seeking the words with which to worship the Father—all of this is a difficult art for the little child. He needs help at every step of the way. God is ever evading the eager little pursuer who yearns to see with the eye of flesh, to hear the tones of the voice, to touch with hands that want to seize the thing they love. "I don't like the moon any more, Aunt Laura," said three year old Patsy. "Why not, dear?" Aunt Laura inquired with surprise. "Because I want to get it, and I can't," replied Patsy without hesitation.

Mrs. Mumford tells the story of the boy who came to his father in great distress some time after having heard the story of Samuel. He stated that he had repeatedly waited to hear God's voice, but that God never spoke to him as he did to Samuel. The father sat silently looking at his son for a few minutes trying to think how he might satisfy the longing for some sign from God. While he looked the child sprang across the room into the father's arms, and quick as a flash came the answer in the father's thought. "Son," he said, "why did you come to me? I didn't call you." "I just knew you wanted me, father," the boy replied. "I didn't speak," said the father; "how did you know?" "I just felt it," said the boy. Then the father suggested that we

know God loves us and wants us by the same inner token, and the child seemed to understand.⁶

At Home in the Presence of God. Many children do not feel at home in the presence of God. They are uneasy, shy, a little fearful, perhaps because of the great mystery. Here again, all the skill and tact of the teacher or parent is needed. God should be endowed with the homelike and lovable attributes of the dear ones about the family hearth. He rejoices in the joys of the child and sympathizes with his sorrows; he is glad when he does well and disappointed when he does ill. He helps the little lad to meet loss and danger bravely, even though the loss is only a dog-eared toy and the danger a shadow on the wall. When he falls and bumps his head or scratches a precious finger, God will assist him in resisting the temptation to cry and to make a big fuss about it. It is such a gentle and generous God, such a strong and patient God that the beginner will gradually feel at home with him, and the offices of the teacher are constantly needed to bring about this result. God needs to be accepted as naturally and happily as the air or the sunshine, the essence of all life in which the child lives and moves and has his being.

The Language of Prayer. The child who feels at home in the presence of God, who knows only love and faith in the Great Father, still may find difficulty in formulating his prayer. Sometimes the words come readily; he has ideas in plenty and expresses them fluently. Again he falls back upon

⁶Edith E. Reed Mumford: "The Dawn of Religion in the Mind of a Child."

the form prayer that he has learned or begs mother or teacher to pray for him. One little lad on a certain Sunday in the Beginner's Department when teacher and children were talking to God about some happy experience, each one in his own tongue, cried out in distress because he couldn't hear the teacher's words. "I can't hear you, Miss Adams," he said, "I don't know what to say." The child should never be forced to pray using original language; the teacher or parent should help the child who feels the need of such assistance.

The Example of the Teacher. The example of the teacher or the parent is also very potent in suggesting to the child suitable postures for prayer and in giving him ideas about the form as well as the content of the prayer. The following story illustrative of the value of a pattern is told by a young teacher: "The prayer which I am telling about was by Charlotte when she was five years old. Her mother had never taught her to pray because she said children didn't understand what they were doing or who God was. I was visiting at their cottage, and one night I went to bed very early. Charlotte saw me kneel down to say my prayers. She said, 'Mary, what are you doing?' I answered, 'Praying.' She said, 'What are you doing that for?' 'Well,' I said, 'I'm thanking God for taking care of me all through the day, and I'm asking him to love all my friends and everyone I love and help to make me a good girl. I tell him everything I think he would like to know.' 'Gee,' said Charlotte, 'I wish I could do that.' Then she came and knelt beside me; I encouraged her, and she began: 'God bless mother and daddy

and Herbert (her brother) and Mary and Martin and Helen (servants) and auntie and uncle and Lady (the dog) and Mike (the cat) and Peter Rabbit, and help Teddy not to lose any more stuffing, and make Margaret stop cheating in croquet, and, God, make the weather nice so daddy can play golf and get strong to work for me, and make Nancy's (the horse) hoof well, and make Mary wake up early so I can make a lot of noise, and then I'll be gooder all day. Amen. Excuse me a minute, God, but I'm glad I saw Mary in her nightie to-night so I could talk to you, and I'll always do it. Thank you for listening, God. Amen again.' I didn't say a word but just kissed her good-night, for I felt that she was too happy in her first communion with God to want to talk more to me. She is eight now and has never missed a night's prayer."

Dangers in the Prayer of Petition. All prayers suggested by the teacher should be childlike in content, as close to the child's experience as possible, like the eloquent one of Charlotte. There will always be many requests for self, some of them for material things and others for help in being good and doing good. The teacher must be on her guard lest the praying become too self-centered and selfish a matter, but with a little suggestion the child will include all the dear ones of the household and neighborhood as did Charlotte.

There is the great danger that the child will believe that he can achieve the impossible by prayer. Tom prayed for snow all one evening; when he awoke the next morning the ground was covered with a very thick, white coat. "It's a good thing," said Tom,

"that I stopped praying last night, or we wouldn't have been able to get out of the house this morning." Hartshorne gives the following story: Edward having heard his father say that it would probably rain the next day, as there had been a dull sunset, prayed, "God, keep your bad sunset till a day when Bobby and I want to play with our trains." Then he called to assure his father that it would not rain because he had asked God not to let it. The next day it happened to be clear; we venture to inquire what would have been the effect upon Edward if it had rained.⁷ He might have accepted the result placidly without any loss of faith; on the other hand, he might have questioned the value of prayer. He might become in time, as many things for which he prays are not granted, a skeptic about the validity of prayer.

The teacher and the parent must therefore help the child to understand from the beginning that God can not be bribed or cajoled or persuaded to give us temporal blessings unless he can do so in justice to us and to others, that through prayer we work with God for the accomplishment of good to ourselves and to all his children. It is his will, not our own, that we want done. The child will readily understand if he has parents and teachers who always permit asking, but never permit "teasing" for gifts, who give happily and generously when they can, but who never hesitate to refuse a request which would prove harmful for the child himself or unfair to others.

⁷Hugh Hartshorne: "Childhood and Character," Appendix I, page 262, No. 19. Copyright, The Pilgrim Press. Used by permission.

Very early he can have simple explanations given him about natural phenomena like rain, snow, wind, and the like, so that he will understand a little bit about the laws governing them, their times and seasons, and will not be superstitious as is primitive man concerning God's personal intervention.

Another danger in the prayer of petition that the teacher must guard against is the tendency of the child to shift his own responsibilities upon God. He asks God to take care of his dog and then proceeds to forget all about feeding the dog or locking him in at night. God is looking after the dog, why worry, is his philosophy. He asks God to help him to be a good boy and then blames his failure to be an angel the next day on his divine helper. How wise the training of the little lad of whom Hartshorne writes. He answered his own prayer in the following manner: The mother not satisfied by the classic version of "Now I Lay Me," taught her boy to say:

"Now I lay me down to sleep,
I pray the Lord my soul to keep,
And when the morning comes again,
Please help me to be good. Amen."

The child said the prayer for the first time one night after he had refused to let his little cousin play with his Halloween cap. After saying his prayer, he jumped out of bed, ran and got the cap, took it to his cousin, saying: "This is the way to be good."⁸

As the little child of whom Mrs. Mumford writes, expressed it: "God helps you do the last little bit

⁸Hugh Hartshorne: "Childhood and Character," chapter 3, page 39. Copyright, The Pilgrim Press. Used by permission.

you can't manage."° Prayer helps us to find out what God wants us to do; we become after talking to him keenly aware of the next step in the path of goodness, and then when insurmountable obstacles rise in the way, he does seem to do the bit we can't manage. The beginner can if rightly guided make through his own experience these discoveries. Such an experience with prayer adds greatly to the child's gain of confidence in his ability to do right and is especially helpful in assisting the timid or fearful child who doubts his own powers at all times.

The Development of Unselfishness in Prayer.

When interceding for others, the child needs first of all to have a clear understanding of what the other person or animal or plant needs, and he must feel a desire to have that thing done. A real sympathy, therefore, has to be developed. The prayer of intercession is open to the danger of the prayer of petition, but it is far less self-centered. It directs attention away from the self to others and their needs. In order to stimulate such outside interests the teacher must skillfully lead the child to find the situations and things and people that are in difficulty or distress and that appeal to him for help. Little babies in an orphanage who have no mothers or fathers and who must depend upon strangers for food, shelter, clothes, playthings, care, love make a strong appeal to the beginner's sympathy. He should go to the babyfold or see pictures of the babies, hear stories about them, and get a reaction from those in care of them for any help that he extends.

°Edith E. Read Mumford: "The Dawn of Religion in the Mind of a Child."

Old men and women, grandpas and grandmas, who have no little grandchildren arouse a desire to help, as do people or animals suffering from thirst, hunger, pain, lack of clothing, lack of shelter—any of the physical wants with which the child is familiar. Certain mental and moral needs are very difficult for him to appreciate because of his limited experience and his concreteness. He has little conception of time and distance and cannot grasp easily differences in custom, so that it is very difficult to develop an intelligent interest in foreign missions, a real understanding of the needs of people who are far away.

The Possibilities in the Prayer of Thanksgiving. Prayers of thanksgiving offer a great opportunity to direct the child's thought to those experiences and people and things that give him happiness and promote his well-being. He becomes very apt in counting his blessings when once he forms the habit. Nothing is too trivial to be included in the prayer so long as it has brought real satisfaction, and the attitude thus acquired toward life and the commonplace as well as the unusual experiences of the every day will do much toward promoting present and future happiness and usefulness. In a certain kindergarten it is the custom to say "grace" before lunch each morning. The teacher had been in the habit of saying or leading the prayer, when one day she asked if any child would like to lead. Little Shirley, four years old, volunteered. Following the pattern set by the teacher, although not using any words that the teacher had used, she prayed, "Dear God, thank you for our doves, thank you for our mice, thank you for our milk, thank you for our

dollies, thank you for our flowers, and for everything. Amen."

On another occasion when a birthday party was in process, the children offered the following suggestion for a prayer that combined a form with which they were familiar, the experience of Margaret Louise's birthday, and the usual expressions of gratitude.

"God is great,
God is good,
And we thank him for our food.
And we thank you for our party,
And for the lemonade and cake,
And for making Margaret Louise a good girl,
And for the fishes and the turtle and the ring doves.
And thank you for finding some one to take care of our duck
that broke its leg. Amen."

The Use and Abuse of the Form Prayer. The value of the form prayer is illustrated in the prayer just quoted. It often gives the child a pattern so that his own originality in praying is stimulated. Before he feels sure enough of his own language it gives him a vehicle for expression, and the beauty of the form unconsciously influences the form of his own prayer. The chief danger in the form prayer is the fact that it is not the utterance of the child, it is not an expression often of his thought and feeling; and it is therefore accepted as lingo for repetition which has no vital contact with the life. Too many times there are words and phrases which are not understood, and frequently the meaning of the whole is not clear to the child. This is true of the beautiful prayer which our Lord gave his disciples and which beginner teachers often make the mistake of repeating with

the group. There is scarcely a concept in the prayer that a little child can understand, even though the adult tries to explain the meaning in simple language. Four-year-old Donald insisted on substituting "gravy bread" for daily bread, "best dresses" for trespasses, and "mailmen" for amen; by such means he contrived to get a little meaning in the form.

Another prayer that is often misunderstood is the old favorite:

"Now I lay me down to sleep,
I pray the Lord my soul to keep.
If I should die before I wake,
I pray the Lord my soul to take."

The comment of a young woman on her experience with that prayer is typical of the reaction of many children. She says: "The prayer was always said hurriedly, and then I would add something of this sort, 'Please God, don't take my soul, or mother's soul, or daddy's soul (usually a long list) even if I did say so.' There is nothing in my childhood that caused so much restlessness and brought about so many fears and tears as that prayer. I do not remember who taught it to me, but I knew I was expected to repeat it every night. As a result, I would lie awake and wish that I would not die before morning. I always rebelled against the thought of having God take my soul. The verse was always mechanical, and spoken as fast as possible, but the final plea came from my heart and was very often accompanied by tears. It was of a pleading nature and was a sincere prayer to an unknown power." The prayer, "Now I Lay Me," has been changed to omit the undesirable elements in this beautiful version:

"Now I lay me down to sleep,
I pray thee, Lord, thy child to keep.
Thy love go with me all the night
And wake me with the morning light."

The following form prayers are beautiful, in simple language with child-like meaning, and can be used by the individual or with the group without fear that they will be misunderstood or lack appeal if correctly presented. They are illustrative of the standard which the teacher should keep in mind in selecting prayer material. No form prayer, however, should ever be repeated without preparing for it by a little talk establishing or recalling the meaning and its connection with the child's experience. Two or three forms used in rotation or by choice are better than one, for the reason that the child through constant repetition may become in time bored by the prayer, and even the teacher's explanation cannot add any element of freshness that will bring zest in its use. It is then that the child is apt to become silly or mischievous during the prayer and prove a disturbance to himself and to others.

"All this day thy love has led me,
And I thank thee for thy care;
Thou hast clothed me, warmed me, fed me;
Listen to my evening prayer."

Mary Lundie Duncan—Adapted.

"Now I wake and see the light;
God has kept me through the night.
I will lift my eyes and pray,
Keep me, Father, through the day."

New England Primer—Adapted.

“God is great and God is good;
Him we thank for daily food.”

“Thanks to our Father we will bring,
For he gives us everything.”

Robert Louis Stevenson.

“For bird and flower,
For sun and shower,
We thank thee, God, our Father.”

“Dear Father of all,
Make me a good child,
Loving and ready,
To hear every call.”

For Discussion

1. How can a little child be helped to feel at home in the presence of God?
2. Why should the child never be forced to pray?
3. In what respects is the example of the teacher an aid to the child in learning to pray?
4. The dangers of the prayer of petition are that: (a) the child may become..... (b) He may try to attain the He may grow He may tend to shift
5. Tell how you would overcome each of these dangers.
6. Does the prayer of intercession have any of the dangers of the prayer of petition? Which one does it avoid?
7. Criticize the use with young children of the prayers “Now I Lay Me”; the “Lord’s Prayer.” What form prayers would you use with beginners?
8. Collect from reading and observation a number of spontaneous prayers of four- and five-year-old children and see what indications you find of the kind of religious training the child has received.

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CHAPTER VII

THE NEED FOR INFORMALITY

IN general, formality suggests the strictly ceremonious, the precise, regular, stiff performance, the accepted, conventional point of view, the sophisticated trained response, while informality stresses the opposite in outward form and inner attack. In a formal garden the flowers are set in symmetrical rows and patterns; geometrical or conventionalized designs are everywhere evident and an atmosphere of correct beauty prevails. How different the informal garden where sunflowers and hollyhocks and dahlias hobnob in the most convivial fashion, and pansies and forget-me-nots and violets hide where they will! Which garden is the more childlike? That is an easy question, for little children are notoriously unceremonious, spontaneous, and natural. They are always offending the grown-up's sense of propriety with their frankness of speech, their naïve advances and dashing assaults. If an environment is chosen for the child in which he is to be at home, then without hesitancy it must be the informal setting.

A Formal Worship Service for Beginners. Even the arrangement of the furniture suggests formality in a department where formality prevails. The little chairs on which the children are seated are set in even rows, the desk behind which the teacher stands in conducting the service is placed at

the front of the room directly in the center, the piano is spaced so many feet from the desk at an oblique angle, the chairs for visitors are behind the desk arranged neatly against the wall or at the sides or back of the room. There is an air of precision and regularity in the way the curtains are fastened back, and the flowers primly posed in the vase on the piano. The resulting effect may not be displeasing; it may indeed be attractive like the clean-cut formal garden.

The posture of the children accentuates the formal appearance. They are sitting stiffly in the little chairs, hands firmly folded in the laps, feet upon the floor, and eyes to the front. They look something like a company of well-drilled soldiers. When they march to put the offering in the basket, extra effort is evident in holding the body straight, and tension is apparent in small backs and shoulders. They kneel to pray, and hands must be folded like those of the angels in the picture of Fra Angelica, eyes must be closed and heads bowed. A bevy of seraphs could not look the part more perfectly than these adorable little beginners.

Every change of position is made in obedience to a signal, and the signal is usually a chord on the piano, although sometimes the triangle is substituted. A chord is played, and the children rise for the hymn; at another chord they are seated. A chord is sounded for silence, for standing to march, for beginning to go forward, for returning to the chairs. It is all beautifully mechanical, like the running of well-oiled machinery.

After the same fashion the service proceeds. There is an opening song response, a Scripture verse slowly

repeated, the singing of a hymn, a prayer, a second hymn, a brief talk, the taking of the offering, another prayer, another hymn, and the worship service is completed. The material in this particular department has been wisely selected. It is beautiful in form, interesting in content, and it is well arranged. Great care has been taken to build the program about a theme emphasizing helpfulness and bringing out the desirable attitudes and habits of which beginners are capable. It is, however, a teacher-planned and directed service from beginning to end. No contributions from the children are expected or accepted; no choices are opened for them to make; no questions are asked and no preferences stated. The children behave like automatons, clever little imitators of a charming teacher with a happy, dynamic personality.

This description pictures a beginner's department of a very formal type, but with every other feature favorable. The teacher and the subject-matter are both interesting to the children. Because of this fact the result to the uninitiated may seem satisfactory; at a cursory glance the children are worshiping in an acceptable fashion, and religious nurture is the inevitable outcome. Before taking a deeper look into the facts at point, let us consider a department where the procedure is informal and note the changes that must be effected.

An Informal Worship Service. The little chairs are arranged in a circle or an informal group; the teacher's chair is in the circle, only slightly higher than those of the children. She is one of the group, not an adult towering above them or maintaining a distant aloofness. The desk used by the secretary is

placed conveniently near the entrance to the room, and the teacher uses a low taboret close beside her chair for a vase of flowers and necessary materials. The piano is near to the group, in such a position that the one who is playing can watch the faces of the teacher and the children. The assistant teachers are seated at the back of the group or in the circle at somewhat irregular intervals. Rugs, curtains, hangings, flowers, a globe of goldfish, pictures for the day upon the low screen—all conspire to give the room a homelike, unconventional appearance.

The children are sitting easily in their little chairs, properly graded in height so that every child is able to place his feet upon the floor while sitting well back in his chair. The hands rest in the lap, the eyes rove happily about the room or glance at little playmates except when the teacher is telling a story or speaking directly to the group. There is no tension in the body in standing or during rhythms; at all times there is freedom in the use of the body and a lack of any self-consciousness.

During the prayer, the teacher clasps her hands, bows her head, and closes her eyes, and because of her example and the suggestion that she gives them before the prayer, most of the children do likewise. No child is reproved for failing to close his eyes or clasp his hands so long as he does not disturb other children in the prayer. Some of the smaller children who have recently entered the department wait a few Sundays before accepting the pattern and in the meantime watch the teacher and the other children with wide-eyed wonder as they pray. They are awed and curious in the presence of a new phenomenon.

The appropriation of as much form as is indicated in the position of the teacher is desirable because not only does the presence of real worship express itself in such form, but the mere taking of the attitude tends to shut out the distracting world of sight and fix attention for a short space of time upon God, the Father, and the thought to be conveyed to him. Often the teacher and children stand as they pray, which shows more respect than the sitting position. They do not kneel because the kneeling position is a difficult one for the beginner to assume and maintain. He quickly becomes uncomfortable and falls back or wiggles about. Unless the floor is very clean, he is often most concerned about soiling his Sunday apparel and senses a conflict between the teacher's and mother's point of view. The additional reverence that might be gained through kneeling is therefore lost because of the physical conditions involved.

There are no formal signals. Occasionally the teacher may find it necessary to use a different tone, to shake her head firmly, or to put her hand to her lips when the children become unusually voluble in their responses. If there is an understanding that only one child should speak at a time, they will readily get the meaning of the little sign and control themselves accordingly. Whatever directions need to be given are stated by the teacher in simple language and very briefly. The worship proceeds as easily and informally as the process of living in a happily ordered home, or the conversation in a group of friends.

The teacher of this department has made careful, prayerful preparation for the morning worship.

There are great branches of gay leaves in the vases, and the windows are swung open to the warm October sunshine, and the trees outside are brilliant with red and yellow coloring. The teacher would call the attention of the children to this bright offering of the fall if it were necessary; but the stimulus is effective without words from her. "O, see the pretty leaves!" Harold cries. "I saw some on the way to Sunday school," Mary recalls. "Why, there are some out of that window." John has made a discovery. The teacher holds a branch in her hands and passes it about as the children want to examine more closely. In the meantime questions are asked and answered as to when the the leaves turn, why the bright colors, what happens after the leaves fall. Children volunteer information on the fun of playing with leaves, of raking them up, using them as a covering for bulbs and flowers, of bonfires. The teacher has placed a picture or two upon the screen showing children playing and working with leaves. These are noted. Little Ellen has learned a song in kindergarten about the "gay leaves," she is permitted to sing it, and the teacher repeats until all the children join in the song.

Gradually the conversation leads to the provision of God, the Father, for trees and flowers in the autumn and for the pleasure of his children. The teacher knows that vital interest has been aroused, that a real feeling of pleasure and appreciation is present; so she suggests that God be thanked for the beautiful, gay leaves and for the fun that children have with them, and that he also be thanked for planning so wisely for the trees and the flowers. She

says that each one may speak to the Father in his own words and may add anything else that he wants to thank God for. The teacher's voice is barely audible above those of the children. Many different prayers are being uttered in the quiet minute or two of worship. The teacher closes her prayer and waits patiently until each child has finished. Then she leads in the familiar hymn, "For Rain and Sunshine, For Flowers Bright and Fair," and one worship experience is concluded.

There may, however, be two or three times during the morning when prayer is introduced. After the offering is taken, in connection with the birthday service, following the story, after the dramatization, or in a play experience at the opening of the session, when some little child hurts another or offends socially otherwise, there may be opportunity for petition or thanksgiving or intercession. The story on a certain Sunday had been the old favorite, "The Lost Lamb." When the story was concluded the children begged to "play it." The teacher asked them how they wanted to "play it." They chose the children for lambs, the larger children for sheep, the teacher for a shepherd. They made a sheepfold with chairs and suggested the place of the pasture at the opposite end of the room, while the hole into which the wee lamb fell was a circle of four children with an opening at the side. The wee lamb that was lost was the smallest child in the group. The lambs and sheep ran and skipped to the pasture following the good shepherd. Some heavy chords on the piano suggested the gathering storm; the good shepherd started for the fold with the flock following; the wee lamb fell in the hole

as the sheep rushed past it; the good shepherd returned to seek the lamb, looking and calling until a tiny cry was heard. When at last he returned to the fold bearing in his arms the lost lamb, the rejoicing knew no bounds. The teacher, feeling the emotion of the group, went from the dramatization into a prayer thanking God for the recovery of the lost lamb and asking him to help all shepherds to take good care of their sheep. No more heartfelt prayer was ever uttered by that group.

On another occasion shortly before Christmas, the children had made a stable out of a box. It was an oblong box that set nicely on a table with the opening at the long side; it had a floor, three sides, and a roof. The children had covered the floor with some straw that the teacher had brought in; they had placed some toy animals of celluloid in the stable—some sheep, a couple of dogs, a donkey, and a camel. They made a small manger out of heavy paper with a little help from the teacher and filled it with straw, and in the straw at their own suggestion they put a very tiny doll wrapped around with a piece of white cloth. Out of clay they fashioned some crude shepherds and stood them about the manger. Then they came around the table singing Luther's "Cradle Hymn" and "Silent Night." Reverently one little girl said, "Let's thank God for the little baby Jesus," and the teacher said, "Each one of you thank him in your own words"—and they did.

In a week-day Church kindergarten the group had been getting ready for a valentine party. Every child had made one or more valentines of red and white paper, pretty pictures, and crayon, which were to be

given away at the party. While talking about whom to invite to the party, one child suggested asking God to come. Many of the children said that God couldn't be invited, others insisted that it was not necessary to invite him because he was always there even though they couldn't see him. They finally concluded that although he would be present anyway he would like to have an invitation, and one little girl bowed her head, folded her hands and with a most eager expression on her face said, "Dear God, if you will come to our party, we will give you a good time."

The teacher is ever on the alert for these occasions when she can lead the children to the Father naturally and know that in every child there is perfect understanding of the thought and a background of emotion for real communion. She would make prayer the means of deepening the child's God-consciousness, of rendering him more keenly aware of his social relationships, of supplying him with the "spiritual dynamic" for action. She will crystallize attitudes, appreciations, and ideals through this expression and set the child upon the highway of Christian living according to his capacity. And all of this she does by setting up a situation in which he lives naturally with his fellows, where he reacts spontaneously, has a chance to choose, to lead, to purpose and plan. Here problems arise, joys and sorrows are borne in upon the consciousness, and God is discovered by first hand contact as a Creator, a Helper, a Comrade, a Father, a Guide, in the only real way that a teacher can further such discovery, through living.

Sometimes an individual child is greatly helped by having his problem, need, or reason for thankfulness especially stressed in the prayer. Sometimes the content of the prayer will be entirely incidental to the one occasion, while certain themes are universal to all children and continual in their need for emphasis in prayer, as the request that God care for his children, bless them and help them to do right. There are times when the teacher may accept many suggestions from the children and incorporate them into a prayer in which she leads and they listen or repeat after her. Again, one or more individual children may suggest offering the prayer while the others listen. If this is done without self-consciousness and with no special notice on the part of the teacher, only good can result to the individual child and to the group. One day the teacher had told the children the story of Jacob's journey to the home of his uncle Laban. She had stressed the fact that God came to him in the night and that he talked to God. Constance said after the story was finished: "I talk to God every night. I will tell you what I say." Constance came and stood beside the teacher and repeated her bed-time prayer; she was followed by other children who also said their prayers. There was the utmost reverence while this little service proceeded.

The teacher is careful to avoid any rudeness, disrespect, or mischief during the worship by checking the response on its first appearance. There is little tendency upon the part of any child to disturb when interest, understanding, and feeling have been thus carefully developed. As a rule, the children are too

entirely in the mood to offer distractions, but if any child so offends, he is spoken to quietly and kindly at once. He is told that every child is quiet and polite when God, the Father, is listening to the prayer, that no one ever interrupts then, even though he may not wish to speak to God himself. If the same little child disturbs a second time, he is given the choice between remaining with the group on the right behavior or taking his chair away until the prayer is finished. Should he fail again, he is firmly sent away.

Comparison of Results in Formal and Informal Worship. In contrasting the two ways of conducting the worship of the child, is it not evident that the informal method secures results that can not be obtained through formality? It secures them too, if rightly understood, without sacrificing respect, obedience, or purpose. The child does not grow in consciousness of God, in closeness of personal relationship, in fluency of expression without the opportunity to experience for himself, to initiate, to choose, to coöperate voluntarily. In a service planned and presented by the adult, the child is not self-active. He is often somewhat awed, fearful, self-conscious. Because he does not understand the purpose of the service and has no feeling of connection with it, he may even acquire a dislike for prayer and for the Sunday school. Little Billy, who had attended a department where the informal method was used, visited a formal service one Sunday. When he returned home, his mother asked him how he liked it. He replied that he didn't like it. When she inquired why, he was very thoughtful for a few

minutes and then he said, "Because the teacher never once asked us what we wanted to do."

Report on One Worship Experience. A teacher writes the following report on her experience in changing from formal to less formal worship: "The children in my department were from three to six years of age, and there were about fifty of them. The parents were in comfortable circumstances and were practically all superficially religious—young married people who danced late Saturday night, but sent their children to Sunday school the next morning. They were typical, young, indulgent parents, anxious to do the right thing for the children, but not well trained.

For several Sundays we had talked about the first signs of spring—the first robin, the warm sunshine, the green grass, pussy willows, blossoming fruit trees, the gentle rain, budding trees, young leaves, spring flowers, the bluebird—and we had brought as many of these beautiful messengers into the room as we could. They had been handled and examined, and there were also innumerable pictures. Each Sunday the enthusiasm and appreciation rose a little higher, and the children were wonderfully delighted over each new acquisition.

We tried to trace every gift back to God—not stressing that God made all these things, but that he sent them or gave them. Finally at the climax of a particular happy discussion, to which many original contributions had been made, I asked if the children would like to tell God how happy they were about all of these lovely gifts of spring. Was there some child who would like to thank God? The atmosphere was one of reverent love and appreciation, and many

children said that they would like to thank God, each one mentioning a different gift. Then in the same manner and using the same tone of our conversation, I bowed my head, closed my eyes, and said: "You may speak to God now if you wish. I know that it would make him very happy to hear us thank him."

Then in rapid succession, sometimes two or three at a time, there were from fifteen to twenty responses:

"Thank you, God, for the flowers."

"I thank you, God, for the robin."

"Thank you, God, for the little new leaves."

"Thank you, God, for the sunshine."

"Thank you, God, for the green grass."

"I thank you for the peach blossoms."

"Thank you for the roses."

"Thank you for the pussy willows."

"Thank you, God, for sending the birds back."

"Thank you for the warm rain."

"Thank you for the flowers."

"Thank you for the sunshine."

When they began to reiterate, I opened my eyes and said quietly, "Does any other child want to thank God?" After waiting a moment a very thoughtful child ventured timidly, "I thank you, God, for my mother and daddy." Another child followed immediately. "And I thank you for my sisters and brothers." I quietly closed the prayer with: "We all thank you, God, for our mothers and daddies, our brothers and sisters, and for all of the lovely things that you give us in the spring. Thank you for loving us, and help us to love you and to be very good children. Amen."

I was not in the habit before this occasion of giving

the children such an opportunity; our prayers had been more formal. When we prayed, we used simple, appropriate verses, or I spoke of what we would like to talk to God about and let them follow my pattern. On this day the children were really thankful; their prayers a natural result, an irresistible impulse to react in that way."

For Discussion

1. List several characteristics of a little child that unfit him for a formal environment.

2. Contrast formal and informal worship with respect to the following points: (a) The arrangement and appearance of the room. (b) The posture and movements of the children. (c) The selection of material. (d) The formulation of prayers.

3. How would you explain the values of informal worship for beginners to the superintendent or pastor who questioned its desirability?

4. How would you answer the following objections to informal worship? (a) Time is wasted in allowing little children to talk, for their contributions are often of little value. (b) The teacher can choose songs, stories, prayers, and all other material more wisely than can children.

5. How may the teacher in informal worship avoid disorders and secure the beautiful, reverent atmosphere necessary for true worship?

6. Keep a diary record of the worship of any little children of beginner age with whom you are associated in the Church school beginner's department, the week-day kindergarten, or the home. Record exactly what is said and done through an entire session by an individual child if you are making a study of one child, or by the group of children in the school. Use initials for the name of teacher and to designate various children. Do not include any comments of your own as to what you think the child was trying to do or to express, or as to why he behaved in a certain way. Let your record be entirely objective. After you have finished it, analyze as to evidences of formal or informal worship.

For Further Reading

"Kindergarten Method in the Church School," chapters 8, 10, 18, and 19. Edna Dean Baker. The Abingdon Press, 1925.

"Method With Beginners," chapter 6. Frances Weld Danielson. The Pilgrim Press, 1921.

"The Dawn of Religion in the Mind of a Child," chapters 1, 2, and 3. Edith E. Read Mumford. Longmans, Green and Company, 1916.

"How We Can Help Children Pray," Chapter 5. Edith E. Read Mumford. Longmans, Green and Company, 1925.

"A Course for Beginners in Religious Education: Teaching Beginners to Pray," page 23. Mary E. Rankin. Charles Scribner's Sons, 1917.

CHAPTER VIII

WORSHIPING THROUGH MUSIC

THE first response of the little child to music is the rhythmic one. Mere babes in arms clap the hands, move the limbs or the whole body in pleasure when listening to music, often with a rude attempt at following the musical beat. The appreciation of the melody of the song or instrumental music, and especially the effort to carry a tune or to sing themselves, as a rule comes later. The first songs of the little child frequently pass unnoticed. They are very short, sometimes consisting of the repetition of one or two words in a sing-song voice, as "Choo-choo-choo-choo," "I see, I see, I see, I see," "Birdie, birdie, birdie, birdie," "Baby go, Baby go," Whatever arouses a strong emotion, is apt to be expressed in the singing refrain; even the child who has cried hard may get rhythm into his noise and end his weeping in a little wailing chant.

Song in Child Development. As the child grows older, three, four years of age, he will sing an entire story that is the outgrowth of a vital experience. Jeannette one morning in Sunday school had been deeply impressed by the talk about the mother bird and the baby birds, she had put her hand inside of the little nest that had been abandoned when the birds flew away, she had listened attentively to all that had been said about the love of the mother bird, the feeding of the young birds, the sleep at night

under the mother's wings. Presently she came to the teacher. "I have a song," she said, and this was what she sang: "Little birds, rest in your nest, mother will bring you some berries to eat. Sleep little birds under her wings. God will take care of you, yes he will." There was a monotonous little tune, but much tenderness and love in the childish voice.

Purpose of Music in Worship

A Medium for Thought and Feeling. It is song as a medium for the expression of thought and emotion or of thought fraught with emotion that is the chief value of music in connection with worship. Cold words can never tell what words borne aloft on the wings of melody convey; not only what the child is thinking but how he feels. Enthusiasm, joy, longing, sympathy, grief, tenderness, love—each in turn finds expression in song. Such expression is not only a pleasure to the singer, but it affords wholesome relief as well. The comfort of hymns and religious songs down through the ages as a means of unburdening the heart unto the Lord is beyond realization. Happiness especially demands this expression, as the psalmist long ago appreciated when he was forever singing, "Make a joyful noise unto the Lord."

Religious Influence. Not only does music afford a channel through which self-expression is attained, but the influence of music upon the one who listens is most potent. The lines of *Il Penseroso* beautifully suggest this value:

"There let the pealing organ blow
In service high and anthems clear,
As may with sweetness through mine ear

Dissolve me into ecstasies
And bring all heaven before mine eyes."

Music played or sung will create the atmosphere for worship more effectively than any other agency. Quiet music of a religious nature stimulates the gentle, reverent mood essential to worship. Children are very sensitive to the suggestion in the music, responding quickly to the march, the skip, the dance, the lullaby, or the hymn. Jeffrey was only three when one evening he listened to his mother singing, "Through the Darkness Be Thou Near Me." He was getting ready for bed at the time and had just come from his father's studio. When he knelt down to pray, he added a new petition, "Through daddy's dark room be thou near me." The hymn had suggested the comfort of God's presence to him in passing through a place that was fearsome to a three-year-old.

A Means of Socializing. Music is also a means of welding individuals together through a common emotional experience. The socializing value in appreciating a thing of beauty with others is great, and greater still when that beauty is produced by the group. An atmosphere of happiness, a feeling of unity, pervade the room of singing worshipers. Children like to sing together, and they especially enjoy singing, each one for the others. It is a delightful way of sharing experience and of giving pleasure. Many little children who have never sung at home burst into song a few Sundays after entering the beginner's department. They cannot resist the social stimulus.

Selection of Music.

Religious Value. In selecting music to be used in worship, the first test is whether or not it has real religious value. Will it create the worshipful mood, will it stimulate the emotions that will send the child to God in prayer? Does it express ideas and emotions in connection with the child's developing sense of human and divine relationships? Will it suggest right action? The children in a certain department had heard the song about the child Jesus which suggests his growing helpfulness in the home. At the close a little boy remarked: "I help my mother every day. I wipe the knives." Two sisters added, "We dressed our baby to-day, and our mother was glad!"

Childlike Content and Language. In order that the song may meet this first test, the content must be childlike. If the ideas and the words in which they are couched are beyond the understanding and out of the range of experience of a kindergarten child, the song will not secure the response of interest and cannot stir the emotions to desirable action. Many songs of distinct merit for older groups in the Church school have no place in the beginner's department, as for instance the favorite junior hymn, "I Would Be True, for There Are Those Who Trust Me," or "The Son of God Goes Forth to War," which has challenged so many college groups. Hymns stressing sin and the redemptive power of the blood or death and the hereafter have no meaning for the little child, who lives in the present and who as a rule does wrong impulsively

and not deliberately. If he possessed the guilty consciousness of wrongdoing which connotes with sin, he still could not comprehend the symbolism of the blood.

The amusing mistakes made by children in attempting to reproduce certain church hymns shows us the folly of teaching these hymns too soon. A certain little girl came home from Sunday school and went about the house lustily singing, "Christ, the Royal Master, Leans Against the Phone," which was her interpretation of the lines from "Onward, Christian Soldiers," "Christ the Royal Master Leads Against the Foe." Another child had heard the hymn, "Bringing in the Sheaves." She could not reproduce all of it, but one phrase she had remembered, "And they will come rejoicing, bringing in the cheese," that was a very interesting climax.

The words of songs then must be simple, concrete, and for the most part familiar, although a few new words will help to build vocabulary and will stimulate interest if the teacher is careful to explain their meaning. Songs about nature which introduce the sun, the rain, the wind, the stars and moon, flowers, birds, animals, and the seasonal changes are always interesting to the child and are helpful in developing appreciation and love of nature, which lead to gratitude to God, the Creator, and also in stimulating attitudes that carry over into the protection and care of nature. Lullabies and songs of occupation stress the child's relationship to dolls and babies and to the world of work. There is much need for songs of greeting, for birthday, cradle-roll, and festival songs which express the emotions that connect with special

occasions and stress the loving consideration due to friends. Hymns of prayer and praise will complete the list of subjects most suitable for the beginners' department.

Criteria for the Music. Equally as important as the words of the song is the music. It should suggest the same meaning, the same emotion as the words. A sprightly tune does not become a lullaby, or a dirge a song of activity. The words should be correct and beautiful verse, and the rhythm of the music should correspond exactly to the rhythm of the poem. It should not be necessary to put extra syllables into the line of verse in order to come out even with the musical beat, or partially to eliminate words for the same purpose. It is very difficult for the average adult to accomplish such feats artistically; it is well-nigh impossible for the little child to do so.

In selecting both song and instrumental music, the standard for the music should be high. Popular tunes, jazzy airs, are not conducive to developing appreciation of really beautiful music or to inspiring the emotions connected with worship. Some instrumental music can be selected from the great masters, but care must be taken that the harmonization is not too complex. The rhythm and the melody should be emphasized, and the harmony used should be very simple. The folk music offers the best source for material because it is pure music, simple, and filled with real feeling of childlike character. Modern music for children, to be successful, must follow the folk as a pattern. Luther's "Cradle Hymn" is an illustration of a song which generations of children

have sung. It meets every standard for words and music.

Length of Song. For the little child the song must not be long. The lines should be short because the child's breath control is limited, and there should be few lines to the stanza. The most successful songs have from four to six lines and not more than two stanzas. Such a song as Robert Louis Stevenson's "Happy Thought," in "Songs for the Little Child," owes its popularity no doubt somewhat to its brevity:

"The world is so full of a number of things,
I am sure we should all be as happy as kings."

Teaching the Song

Presentation. In introducing the new song, there is one principle that should always be kept in mind. The song should be so presented that it comes as the natural expression of experience. The children have been down beside the sea and have listened to the sound of the waves. They have also put the shells to their ears and have heard in them the sound of the sea. How quick is their response as the teacher sings for them Emilie Poulsson's "Put the pretty pink shell to your pretty pink ear, and listening well you its message will hear"! They have watched the timid little bunny visitors as they have nibbled the lettuce in the beginner's room. With ready assent they follow the teacher in singing, "Bunny, pretty bunny."

In both of these illustrations, actual contact has been made with the object. The child has lived what he sings; ideas and emotion are the immediate outcome. Often, however, the teacher's problem is to

recall through conversation, picture, story, a past experience in such a vivid fashion that the child lives again what has gone, and through the imagination is projected into the spirit of the song. The teacher asks the children to remember what has given them the most pleasure in the week since they have last met, and when every child's face is bright with the thought of his particular joy, the teacher begins a hymn of praise, and the children happily take up the refrain.

The Child's Original Song. The teacher should also give opportunity for the children to sing their own songs about any experience that stirs them to expression. The song may be one that the child has heard before and uses appropriately on the new occasion, but very often it is his own creation. One Sunday morning when the room was glorious with sunshine and daffodils, little Mary came to the teacher with a song. She fingered the flowers on the low table as she sang:

"I love the yellow posies,
The yellow posies,
They are pretty.
I plant my seeds,
You send your sunshine,
You send your rain.
Here are the yellow posies!"

Long ago the psalmist sang, "He watereth the hills from his chambers; the earth is satisfied with the fruit of thy works." Mary was expressing in her child-like form as beautiful a tribute to her Creator. The teacher caught the tune of the little song and sang it with Mary; then they invited the other children to

sing with them. Sometimes the teacher is not musically trained so that she can follow the child's melody, and sometimes the child's song is not of sufficient value either from the standpoint of words or music to warrant repetition. In that event the teacher will accept the child's contribution with a word of pleasant recognition and pass to some other song or to a different activity.

Memorizing the Song. Since the song is a whole, a story or an appreciation in musical form, there should not be a separation of words and music at the first presentation. The song should bring its message as a song, and if the teacher enunciates carefully and sings not too rapidly the child will understand, especially if the content of the song is already in the background of his experience. If the song is sung over and over while the interest of the children continues, they will join in gradually until soon all are singing. The repetitive phrases, the cries and calls in the song will be caught first, as "Hum, hum, hum," in the bee song, or "Cheer-up, chee, chee," in the bird song.

After the song has been sung a few times, it is desirable to talk about any new words, asking the children to volunteer the meaning and to repeat very distinctly and slowly two or three times any words or combination of words difficult for the children to pronounce. A few questions bringing out the ideas in the song will also be of value in memorizing. For instance, in teaching Luther's "Cradle Hymn" the teacher might ask the following questions: "Who is the baby in the song?" "Where did he lay his

head?" "What looked down upon him where he lay?" "Did the baby fall asleep on the hay?"

The teacher must watch carefully the children's interest in repeating the song for memorization. The span of attention is relatively short, and when the children show signs of restlessness it is wise to wait until another time to sing the song again. If the hymn is sung before the prayer, it may possibly be used again after the prayer or just before the children go home. Several repetitions at intervals during the session will be more effective than to put all the repetitions at one time.

Recall in Repetition. If the song is used again on the following Sunday or revived at any later time, the teacher may well spend a few minutes in recalling through picture or conversation or story the mood for the song. In this way she will gain a joy in singing and a spontaneity that is apt to be absent when the song is brought in as something irrelevant to the thought and feeling of the moment. In her eagerness to have the children memorize the songs, the teacher must never lose the spirit of play so essential in holding the child's interest or the spirit of reverence so important in securing worship.

Development of Beautiful Tone. The pitch of the child's voice is relatively high, so that the song should seldom go lower than middle E. Many little children, in their first attempts to sing, do not follow the melody correctly. They sing higher or lower or in a monotonous sing-song. They need to have the attention called to the melody as sung by the teacher, by another child, or played by the piano. The pianist needs to play softly for children's singing, emphasize-

ing, however, the melody and rhythm, but not overwhelming the children's voices. The children should sing often without the piano that they may become less dependent upon it, and they may sing alone if they like so that the individual voice is heard. No child should be made self-conscious by a criticism on his failure to carry the tune; on the other hand, every effort should be made to give him confidence and happiness in his singing. Drill on song material which involves monotonous repetition with no element of variety should never be used in worship because it destroys the atmosphere of devotion as well as offending against the nature of the child of this age.

Many teachers have to struggle with the loud, harsh singing of little children, which is due often in slum districts to street singing and to the popular tunes heard in the movie and cheap vaudeville. It is more effective to secure the beautiful tone through example in singing for the children and through developing a real appreciation for the meaning of the song than by telling them to "sing softly." The latter admonition often produces a smothered or suppressed tone that is very undesirable. "How does the bird sing? Listen. Let us sing like him," usually carries a suggestion that distinctly changes the tone. Little children are always copying the teacher. If she sings correctly and beautifully with sincere religious feeling, they will tend to rise to her standard.

For Discussion

1. A child riding downtown in a bus was heard the other day chanting innumerable times, "No. 6 Bus! No. 6 Bus! No. 6 Bus!" What prompted this little refrain? Give instances

of similar little songs created by young children. What value of music do these spontaneous little songs suggest?

2. How would you create the atmosphere for the worship of a group of children?

3. How do you explain the fact that many children who have never sung at home burst into song a few weeks after entering school or Sunday school?

4. Make a list of the questions which a teacher should ask herself concerning a song book before choosing it as the basis for worship with young children.

5. Give an illustration showing misinterpretation of the meaning of a hymn on the part of a child. How may such misinterpretations be avoided?

6. Just how might the teacher present to beginners a song entitled "Gay Leaves"; a hymn entitled "God Loves Me"?

7. Contrast an undesirable and a desirable method of helping little children to memorize a hymn.

8. Suggest ways of helping the little child to sing with correct and beautiful tone.

9. Make a list of songs for beginners in various collections which you think meet the standards for words and music set forth in this chapter. Include at least twenty songs in your list.

For Further Reading

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CHAPTER IX

WORSHIPING THROUGH OFFERING

IT may become a delightful pastime to attend a service of worship and feel the emotions of love, gratitude, and sympathy. To thrill with the joys and achievements of others, to let the tears fall for their terrors and griefs, is not an unpleasant experience. In fact, it possesses for most people such fascination that they seek repetition through the newspaper, the novel, the opera, the play, or the sermon. Such reveling in emotion may be therefore merely a selfish pursuit, serving only to provide recreation and perchance to give the individual a better balance and a broader insight by merging vicariously with other lives.

Worship itself fails to produce any result in some lives except the experience of the service in giving satisfaction to the individual while he participates. Men and women and little children are sometimes as regardless of the needs of others as if they had never attended church or Sunday school. Jesus had this failure of worship in mind when he said, "Not he that calleth me 'Lord, Lord,' but he that doeth the will of my Father."

The Purpose of the Offering. The purpose of the offering, then, is first of all to afford a definite and immediate expression in a concrete act of service to others, to find a safe exit for the good attitudes of interest, friendliness, and kindness aroused by com-

munion with God and presentation of the needs of his children. Emotions of love and sympathy and gratitude are the inevitable result of setting forth the goodness of God as the Great Father of all. These emotions naturally urge to action; they precipitate the one who experiences them into service if a way is only opened up. However, a habit may easily be built of suppressing these emotions or of expressing merely in words, never by service or sacrifice. For the sake of the child's own beauty of character, of his progress in really identifying himself with God, and of his serviceableness as a member of the Church and the community, he needs at the beginning of his religious training to form the habit of regular and generous giving.

The Meaning of the Offering

Understanding the Cause. In order that the offering may be an integral part of the worship, may afford an expression of the ideas and emotions aroused, it is absolutely necessary that the child understands where his gift goes. In many beginners' departments the pennies are dropped in the basket every Sunday to the little song, "Dropping, dropping, hear the pennies fall," and no adequate explanation is given as to the cause for which the collection is taken. Very frequently the money is turned over to the church treasurer and the teacher herself has only a dim idea of its final destination. Occasionally in certain other situations the teacher gives a more or less definite statement of the use to be made of the funds, but she forgets to repeat this statement each Sunday, and the child does not remember from one week to the next. Often she contents herself by

telling the children that the money is brought to show love for God and Jesus. No little child is able to give intelligently and few will care to give at all unless the appeal is childlike and couched in understandable terms. Unless father or mother remembers, the child comes penniless to the church under these circumstances.

The Desire to Help. If a cause possessing a live interest for little children, arousing sympathy and understanding, is carefully presented, most of the children will want to help. There are always some, however, who are less imaginative, less sensitive to the sufferings of others, or more selfish and who therefore do not respond readily to any appeal. These children, however, may yield to the public opinion of the group when the matter of giving is discussed; they may wish to imitate "the goodness which has become fashionable"; they may want to secure the approval of the teacher and the other children. It is far the best way, in securing the coöperation of the children in giving, to set forth the needs in a specific case and then let them solve the problem of how to meet these needs. They will make some foolish suggestions and some very good ones. The teacher can assist by questions in sorting out the best suggestions, and the fact that every child has participated in reaching the conclusion guarantees a support which cannot be obtained in any other way.

Real Effort in Giving. Another problem that confronts the teacher is how to secure a real effort in giving. Beginners usually do not earn their own money, and often they do not even share money or gifts belonging to themselves. Father as a rule

supplies the Sunday school funds for the explicit purpose of being used in Sunday school. The child has no choice in the matter. Not infrequently father or mother hands the money or envelope to the teacher, and she keeps it until the moment when the child drops it in the basket. He, of course, likes the dropping because it is activity, but in no other way is he intimately concerned with the gift. Being an intermediary between his parent and the collection basket is in no sense a vital experience in giving for him.

This problem cannot be solved without the help of the father and mother, and to that end the teacher must either through a letter, a personal interview, or wiser still in a parents' discussion group give the individual parent a clear idea of what she is trying to achieve through the offering service and of how he may assist. She can suggest that the child be permitted to do some specific task in the home, like emptying the waste baskets, and that he receive his Sunday school money in return. This suggestion is not intended to indicate that the child should be paid for the regular program of helpfulness with family duties, but that a special new task be found which he can legitimately be paid for because otherwise he would not be asked to undertake it. If he is supplied with funds for his bank or for minor purchases, then let him take his gift from this account. If objects or articles of clothing are to be given instead of money, he may share some of his own or at least be taken on the shopping excursion and allowed some choice in selecting his gift.

Securing Satisfaction. Not only is it desirable that the child find immediate satisfaction in the act of giving through association with the other children in this exercise, through the activity itself, through the expression of his emotions, but that satisfaction must be continued through contact, direct or indirect, with the object of his sympathy and love. He must know either by letter or personal visit that his gift is received and used for the purpose for which he has given it and that it has produced happiness and gratitude in the recipient. How the little faces of kindergarten children glow with pleasure when words of appreciation are said to them concerning the joy their gifts have created! A continuance in well-doing is largely involved in the satisfaction to be gained through giving.

The Dangers to be Avoided

Misunderstandings of the Purpose. Unless the purpose of the offering is carefully explained to the child, he is very apt to put his own interpretation on the act or to misinterpret what the teacher says. When questioned, kindergarten children have variously stated the destination of the money as the teacher, the minister, God, Jesus, or poor children. They are usually very vague when asked what these people do with their money; sometimes, however, they have the whole matter clearly figured out, as did the small child who thought the angels called for the collection after Sunday school was out and took it up to God, who bought candy for himself.

Misuse of Money. Another danger, and one which ties up with failure to make the child under-

stand and deeply desire to help, is the selfish and deceitful misappropriation of the money. A little boy had a penny and a nickel one Sunday morning. He put the penny in the offering and held the nickel in his hand. The teacher saw what he had done and asked him if the nickel was not intended for the offering. She was almost certain that it was so intended because of the guilty flush on his face, although he strenuously denied his mistake. She suggested that they should ask his mother when she came at noon. They inquired of the mother and found that the teacher was right. After a little talk, carefully explaining the need of the children in the orphanage for this money, the small boy put the nickel in the basket very willingly, and there was no further trouble on subsequent Sundays. Of course, the teacher was most wise in watching for such attempts, but every evidence of the kind shows that the teaching in relation to giving has failed of full success with the particular child.

Many little children are tempted, in passing drug stores or candy stores on the way to Sunday school, to spend the money for candy or gum. The teacher and the parent need to be on the alert constantly, for the practice readily becomes a habit and a very serious one in the moral development of the child. If the child understands what he is giving his money for, if he is eager to give it and if he has earned it or is voluntarily taking it from his own account, he is not very apt to stray into the tempting by-path. The use of the envelope and the pledge of a weekly amount protects the child somewhat from

temptation and enables the teacher more readily to detect delinquency.

Indifference. If the offering does not cost the child anything, if he has had no part in securing it, there is danger that he will get little pleasure in giving it and that he will be indifferent about remembering the responsibility. Some little children do not take the pains to untie the knot in the handkerchief, or the latch on the pocket book. The money lies hidden in the depths of a pocket while the small boy trots heedlessly by the offering basket. Other little children are apt to be forgetful, no matter how great the interest. The teacher needs to remind all to get out their gifts in advance. If she will look about the group nodding approval as the pennies, the nickels, dimes, or envelopes are held out by eager hands, she will eliminate the possibility of the gift being retained through indifference or carelessness. The child who gets satisfaction out of his giving is the one who will insist on having money before he leaves home and will be on the *que vive* to put it in the basket.

Appropriate Objects or Causes

Their General Character. The four- or five-year-old child's experience is limited. He does not comprehend distinctions in time and space; he is confused by descriptions of people who are very far away and very different in appearance and customs from himself. He can understand best those who are near at hand and whose needs are somewhat like his own. He appreciates physical wants most readily—hunger for food, lack of clothes to keep warm, desire for toys. He is very concrete and hence responds best to the

call of specific individuals for specific material objects. His mental grasp is limited, and he is easily confused by the presentation of too many causes—one or two are sufficient for one year. He likes to give tangible gifts—the actual coin is precious to him, and the teacher should not limit his thought or that of his parents to pennies. He can give nickels, dimes, quarters, a dollar occasionally. He also takes great pleasure in bringing other objects—fruit, vegetables, toys, articles of clothing, flowers, scrapbooks and the like.

Childrens' Charities. Since children are supremely interested in other children, a cause for children is the most appropriate and most satisfactory. An orphanage is ideal, because the child can readily appreciate the need for shelter, food, and clothing of little children who have no fathers or mothers. A day nursery, a babyfold, a mission kindergarten can all be presented to afford a strong appeal; pictures can be shown; if the place is near, visits can be paid; letters can be written by the teacher at the children's dictation, and little incidents can be related about individual children. Often one baby or one little child can be selected as the recipient of the children's giving. Her picture can be hung in the room and she can become as real a friend as any child in the group. Her growth and general progress in learning can be carefully followed from week to week.

Limitations. Even though the Sunday school will not permit all the money of the beginners' department to be distributed to one or two causes, it is still best for the teacher to make a vivid presenta-

tion of one or two instead of confusing the children by attempting to cover the entire field. As a rule, it is wiser to wait until the child is older before attempting to acquaint him with foreign missions, but of course there are exceptions where a missionary and his family form a direct contact. Little Mary, four years old, had been born in China and was spending a year with her parents in the United States. She attended a certain beginner department and became very dear to all the children. When she returned to China, they followed her journey by pictures of the train, the steamship, and the Chinese city where she lived. They wrote to her and sent her money and gifts for herself and the Chinese children.

The Offering Service

The Introduction. It is well to preface the taking of the offering each Sunday by a talk about its purpose. A new picture may be brought in, some object of interest may be shown, a letter read, a visit described, even about a cause that has been often discussed before. It is always in order to ask the children to tell why they brought money or other gifts and to let them decide what particular gift shall be purchased with the money. If they are buying food for an orphanage, they greatly enjoy prescribing the diet or suggesting the menu for a particular meal.

When each child reveals intelligent interest in his face, the teacher may suggest the gift being brought out of pocket or purse. Often children are allowed to be careless with the money before time for the offering service, but if the teacher gives her approval

to the strong children who are big enough to keep their money off the floor, she will have little trouble. If the money of the mischievous or stubborn child who continues to drop it is taken by the teacher a few times for safe-keeping, he will as a rule learn self-control.

The March. In taking the offering, the children may march around the room, passing a child or teacher who holds the basket. If there are many new children in the department, it may be better for a time to have the children remain seated while one child passes the basket. There are few enough opportunities for activity, and such an opportunity is greatly needed in connection with the offering service if the best results in attention and interest are obtained from these very active little children.

Counting. When they return to their seats, the child who held the basket may bring it to the teacher. Occasionally she may let the children help her count the money. All the children may count in unison, or one child may count the pennies, another the nickels, and still another the dimes. The children greatly enjoy the counting and are much impressed by the size of their combined gift. Individuals enjoy lifting the basket occasionally to test its weight, thus realizing more keenly how much they have contributed by all giving to the orphanage. A brief word may be said by the teacher in appreciation of the gift and of what it will do in helping the little children for whom it is brought.

The Prayer. Then the teacher may suggest asking God the Father to bless the gift and to make the children for whom it is intended happy and good

children. She may use a form prayer in which the children join, or she may let each child pray spontaneously asking God whatever he thinks desirable for the little children to whom the money is given. "Dear God," Eddie prayed one Sunday, "give those little children that has no mothers some bread and some milk and some spinach and a pear. Amen."

For Discussion

1. What is the test of the success of worship?
2. Which of these statements do you consider true? (a) The primary purpose of the offering in Sunday school is to collect money for some good cause. (b) The beginner child should not be burdened with a knowledge of the destination of the pennies dropped into the basket. (c) The teacher is justified in praising the children who remember to bring an offering each Sunday. (d) A penny that the child earns is a more valuable gift than a dime given him by his father for the offering.
3. It is a law of learning that children tend to repeat acts which give them pleasure or satisfaction. In what different ways may the giving of an offering be made a pleasant or satisfying experience for young children?
4. Illustrate some of the dangers of the offering of money in the Sunday school and explain how each may be avoided.
5. Name several worthy causes in your vicinity which you feel would appeal to the youngest children in your Church school.
6. Select one worthy cause in your vicinity and tell how you would proceed to arouse and sustain the children's interest in this particular cause.
7. Suggest a form prayer which might be used at the close of the children's offertory. Would you consider a form prayer or spontaneous prayers more valuable for this purpose?

For Further Reading

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CHAPTER X

MOTIVATION OF CONDUCT AND OF SERVICE

ONE of the functions of worship is to motivate conduct and service. Failing to do this it falls short of its high privilege. If the little child who has worshiped in the Beginner Department, does not have greater respect for his neighbor, more love for his teacher and parent, more sympathy for the wounded bird and the hungry child, he has not profited as he should by this element in the service. He should not only possess these emotions in greater degree, but he should have the suggestion to carry them over into action. He should learn to refrain from harming or interfering with another child, to do as his mother or teacher directs, to get help for the wounded bird, and find food for the hungry child.

The Nature of Love

Expression in Conduct Necessary to Growth.

If worship is properly conducted, the child's love for God, the Father, will be developed from Sunday to Sunday, as he more fully appreciates the love of God for him, the extent of God's creation and at the same time his tenderness in caring for the individual. It is, however, not sufficient in developing love to dwell upon and magnify the goodness of God to the child. It is also essential, if love is to grow, that the child begins to do things to show his love for God.

He must learn to help God by bringing his will to pass, to behave as God wants his children to behave, and to serve others who are in need, weaker, or more helpless than himself.

Loving and Giving Inseparable. It is part of the child's growth in habit formation and in the attainment of character that he has experience every day in doing for others, and that he comes largely through that experience to appreciate that loving and giving, loving and serving are inseparable. Love for mother means not merely protestations of affection and eager caresses, but running errands, watching the baby, picking up playthings. Love for father and other members of the family, for teacher and playmates, for neighbors and relatives bears the same interpretation in terms of their needs and demands.

The Inversion of Love. As love is thus expressed, it increases in depth and intensity, and the forming character holds the stamp of daily acts of unselfishness, courtesy, and consideration for others. If love does not have such expression, it becomes selfish and demanding; it turns inward and feeds self-love. To fail, therefore, to stimulate service, the outgoing of love in bringing comfort and joy to others, is to withhold the happiness that all true giving of the self affords and to turn love inward instead of outward, which in time makes for a thoroughly selfish and unlovable character.

Little Annette is only six years of age, and this is her first year in school. She did not attend kindergarten, and she has never gone to Sunday school. From the beginning of her life, her father and mother have bowed to her every wish. From the moment

when the first wish was a cry, she has ruled the household like a despot. She has no regular habits. Caprice controls eating, sleeping, bathing, and play. Almost every day she has a frightful tantrum and always two or three hard crying spells. She is nervous, peevish, unhappy, and her career in school is a thorny one. She pinches, slaps, and pushes the other children; she snatches their toys and materials; she refuses to obey the teacher and has gone so far as to retaliate violently when the teacher has attempted to restrain her. The teacher is trying to get the coöperation of the parents and to bring happiness and health to this unfortunate child by teaching her obedience and loving service. It is a difficult task and one which can never be as fully accomplished as if the impressions and reactions of the first six years had been right.

The Ability of the Child

Physical and Mental Development. The child of four or five has gained fair control of his body and a certain independence in action. He has a clear consciousness of himself as different or separate from other selves, he is more accurate in recalling his experiences, he is very imitative and imaginative, and is capable of assuming some responsibility. Because of this physical and mental development there are many concrete ways in which he can show his love for God in conduct and service. Of course he has to understand prior to such action that God is pleased when his children do right and that he is disappointed when they do wrong, that God helps those who are trying to do right and to serve others.

Concrete Ways of Serving. Some of the ways in which the teacher or mother may suggest constantly that the child express his love are in leaving alone the possessions of others unless he has permission to touch them, in refraining from striking, pushing, or otherwise interfering with the free activity of others unless his own rights are infringed, and in taking proper care of his playthings and other belongings. He is able to listen when mother or teacher speaks and to do promptly what is asked of him. He can help in a variety of ways—by bringing a glass of water, fetching small articles, setting a table, putting flowers in water, feeding the pets, dusting the chairs, opening the door, picking up the papers, and in many other small services. He can share his playthings, his food, his friends, his books, his clothes. He can control his emotions to a certain extent; he can gradually learn to hold back the tears and the howls; and he can even conquer some of his fears with proper explanation, encouragement, and appreciation.

Control of Emotions. The beginner is very proud and happy when he tells you that he cut his finger or skinned his knee and did not cry about it. He is equally happy when he can bring himself to enter a dark room alone, to stay at kindergarten with strange children, to jump from a high place, or to master any one of many childhood fears. He is rightly proud when, instead of throwing himself kicking and screaming upon the floor, he can sit upon his chair and wait until his anger cools. In these specific ways he is proving that he is no longer a baby, but that he has entered the period of conscious direction and control.

Steps in Doing Right

Understanding. When it is necessary to influence a child to do a certain thing which happens to be the right or desirable reaction at the moment, or when the first response is to be gained in forming a habit that should function regularly thereafter in his life, there are three major steps that the teacher or parent must take if the act is to be intelligent, voluntary, and self-initiated. First the child must understand why right is right, why the act suggested to him is the proper one for him to take. Many parents and teachers secure obedience through a dominating personality, or in the event the child does not readily respond punishments are used which induce fear. The child obeys not because he understands the reason and appreciates the nature of his deed, but because he is afraid not to obey or is swept along by the grown-up magnetic appeal. Such discipline in no way prepares for a life that is moral and religious, the life controlled by principle motivated by right desire.

There are several teaching devices which can be used in helping the child to understand. If the teacher, for instance, wishes to have the children feed the birds in winter, she can talk to them about the winter birds, showing pictures of the birds in the snow and pointing out their lack of food. She can then suggest that the children provide crumbs for the birds, or she can put the problem of feeding to the group for discussion by asking how the birds may be fed. If she prefers, she can open the window and put some crumbs on the sill and then let the children

watch the birds eat them. The result will probably be imitation of her example.

Thus by talks, discussion including problem solving, suggestion, and example, little children come to understand what is right and what is wrong, why a certain course of action is to be preferred to another, what is kind, helpful, and loving. The actual doing, however, following such preparation, teaches the child most fully the nature of his deed. Sometimes after teacher or parent has done his utmost to influence the child to pursue a certain course of action, the child when unobserved will do the opposite; but the result of his deed either in the form of a natural punishment or a rational one bestowed by his parent will give him a clearer understanding. Many a child has been warned of the indigestibility of green fruit, but in a moment of temptation has yielded and has gained a more thorough understanding of why it should be let alone.

Desiring. Many children who understand what is right or desirable fail to do it because they have no interest, no desire, no real motive or purpose. The second necessary step, then, is to lead the child to desire the right, to want to do the kind, helpful, coöperative act. There are various suggestions which may be used in reaching this end. The talk which appeals to his understanding may also touch his emotions and arouse love, sympathy, tenderness, or a real interest in the proposed project. Stories through their appeal to the emotions and the imagination and through setting up an ideal, a hero, an example, often sweep the child along to the desired action. The example of the parent, the teacher, or

of other children is a potent factor in inducing imitation. Many children are so suggestible that they cannot resist the appeal to copy another's deed.

The judicious use of approval is also very effective. If the parent or the teacher commends the act of one child, the others eagerly seek that same commendation, and when the approval is secured the act is repeated for the purpose of gaining it again, until soon a habit is formed. The little child seeks the approval of his parents, his teachers, and to a certain extent of his playmates. If the concept of God is rightly formed and God is identified with the good, the right, the true after the child's love for him has become a vital reality, then he will seek to know if he is meeting God's approval. When the teacher has given an initial understanding and interest in action along a certain line, she can in worship deepen the appeal by showing that the act is one which God would like, which would help him, which he will bless. Every problem, every cause for giving or serving, every desirable activity may be taken to him in prayer at the close of the talk, the story, or the discussion.

The happiness which follows doing right, helping and serving others, particularly when it is accompanied by the approval of those whom the child loves, admires, and would imitate, gradually induces more right doing, more serving, until the life is set in a channel of positive activity. Unless the process is a conscious one, however, the child gropes blindly, now doing well and now ill as impulses direct, without any rational guidance in controlling his own conduct.

Doing. The final step in the process of getting

right done is the actual doing. When understanding has been secured and desire is strong, then the child must possess the control of self to do the deed. Just here parents and teachers of little children often misjudge. Sometimes the child does not have the physical ability to do what is asked of him. He fails, not because knowing and desiring are absent, but because he does not yet possess the necessary physical coördinations. He cannot fill the vase without spilling the water, he lets the glasses slide off the tray, he cannot skip, gallop, or sing. Again attention is fleeting, memory inaccurate, imagination confused—the lack is one of mental development. Parents and teachers must wait for physical and mental growth and should be careful not to ask the little child to perform that which is beyond his present powers of accomplishment.

A child who in all other respects is ready to perform sometimes fails to get into action. He inhibits rather than discharges; he has a stubborn set and cannot overcome his initial inertia. Such a child can often be helped by offering him a choice of two activities or procedures and by allowing him a few minutes in which to make a decision. If he does not act when the time limit is reached, then the parent or teacher must insist on action, preferably the course least desirable to him. A certain little child never was ready to put his blocks away when the luncheon or dinner bell rang. His mother was advised to give him a choice between putting the blocks in the box at the end of five minutes or having his luncheon later alone. The first time this alternative was suggested he continued to play with the blocks,

whereupon his mother did not permit him to come to the table with the rest of the family, but insisted that he eat after they had left the table. The second time and thereafter James put the blocks away before the five minutes had elapsed.

Relation of Worship to Conduct and Service

Habit Formation in Worship Period. How may we relate the three steps in developing self-control, and thus in securing right conduct and service, to the worship? During the worship itself much valuable habit formation is taking place. The children are making certain adjustments to one another, to the teacher, to God. They should be gaining habits of attention to the one speaking, of participation in the conversation, the singing, the prayer, of quiet and reverence in manner and voice, of courtesy and consideration for the other children. Bad habits prevalent in many Sunday schools, such as inattention, lack of hearty participation, rudeness to the other children, including pinching, knocking, pushing, and irreverence in prayer shown by whispering and suppressed giggling, make their first appearance in the beginner department. The teacher who ignores such disturbances or suppresses them by the power of her personality is losing a great opportunity to make worship function in motivating conduct. How can she expect that the worship in Sunday school will affect the child's conduct favorably outside if it leaves his reactions untouched in Sunday school?

Each desirable change in behavior, each new habit to be formed, should be carefully presented to the group in order to develop understanding and real

desire to act in that way. God, like father, mother, and teacher, is interested in every smallest reaction of the child. He is pleased when there is quiet and reverence in the prayer, when every little child lifts up his voice in song, and when Billy refrains from pushing Johnny out of his seat or shares the coveted place by the teacher with him. Prayer is never more real in the child's experience than when it is uttered in connection with a present problem. God may be told of the joy of all when certain habits are well formed; he should be asked for help in forming these habits. Example, discussion, approval may be freely used. The teacher should be careful not to expect the impossible of these little children. If she prolongs the prayer to five or more minutes, she will have inattention and restlessness because a five-year-old as a rule cannot attend in prayer for that length of time, no matter how good his motive may be.

Conduct and Service Outside Sunday School.

In addition to the conduct and service which takes place at the Sunday hour in the presence of the teacher, there will always be other habits and acts of service that the worship should motivate, but which may take place during the week, in the home, at school, on the playground, or in the neighbor's home. The procedure in developing understanding and interest for each one of these habits or specific deeds will be exactly the same as for those formed in the Sunday school. The coöperation of the parent should be secured in helping the little child during the week so that he will not forget his good intent or fail through discouragement. The teacher can take

the first two steps with the child, but the parent's help is absolutely essential on the third.

The additional story material, the handwork or picture which the teacher sends home with the child not only aids the understanding of the parent, but it may serve as a constant reminder to the child. For instance, if the children who have become interested in feeding the winter birds make little baskets in the handwork period in which they may put crumbs, the baskets remind them during the weeks that follow of this service to the birds. The teacher should also take a little time each Sunday morning to question about the specific activities that have been suggested the week before, and to show her happiness and approval if the children have remembered. If the parents will take the responsibility of letting the teacher know how the children have been progressing, the check is more accurate and the child freer from the danger of misrepresenting in order to win approbation.

The Gist of the Whole Matter. In that wonderful little book, "The Dawn of Religion in the Mind of the Child," Edith E. Read Mumford writes with reference to this matter of conduct and service: "Children have to grow good under the influence of a compelling environment, but long-continued forcing never inspired anyone with a love of right doing. It is by the constraining influence of a discerning love; it is by the unconscious influence of our own example, after we have awakened such love; it is by the power of prayer when God is known and loved—that right desire is gradually strengthened; until the voice of

conscience—the Divine Impulse from within urging us forward—becomes ever more clearly heard.”¹⁰ Then gradually as he is helped day by day the little child gains the ability to control himself, to choose right from wrong, to behave as a child of God and a member of the kingdom of brotherly love.

For Discussion

1. Do you agree with the statement, “Conduct is the ultimate test of prayer”? Justify your opinion.
2. Why is love unexpressed harmful to the individual?
3. Point out how the beginner’s consciousness of himself as separate from other selves helps in securing self-control.
4. Make a list of ten specific acts of service which a child of four years can perform.
5. Tell exactly how you would help the child to form the habit of saying “grace” for food.
6. Fill the blank spaces in the following statement with the correct words:
The teacher must take three steps in helping the child to right conduct—that is, she must help him to , to , to
7. Criticize the statement: the child who does not sing should be forced to sing.
8. Underscore the correct ending for this sentence:
Rude conduct in worship should be (ignored, suppressed, changed).
9. Observe worship in a beginners’ department and note one specific instance of motivation of service and conduct. Describe in detail.

For Further Reading

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¹⁰Edith E. Read Mumford: “The Dawn of Religion in the Mind of a Child,” chapter 5, page 75. Longmans, Green and Company. Used by permission.

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